



## The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 45  
Issue 1 *March*

Article 1

2018

# Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare Vol. 45 No. 1

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>

### Recommended Citation

(2018) "Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare Vol. 45 No. 1," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol45/iss1/1>

This Complete Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [maira.bundza@wmich.edu](mailto:maira.bundza@wmich.edu).





# Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

VOLUME XLV  
NUMBER 1  
March, 2018

The JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WELFARE is edited and published by the SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5354.

JSSW is sponsored jointly by Western Michigan University, the College of Health and Human Services, and School of Social Work. The substantial support of the University of California, Berkeley in the publication of the journal is gratefully acknowledged.

*Editor:* Robert D. Leighninger, Jr.

*Managing Editor:* Melinda McCormick  
E-Mail: [swrk-jssw@wmich.edu](mailto:swrk-jssw@wmich.edu)

*International Editor:* Jason L. Powell

#### Editorial Board

Mimi Abramowitz	Lorraine M. Gutiérrez	John Murphy
Bruce Arrigo	Charles Guzzetta	Robert Newby
Ellen Benoit	Robert Hawkins	Manoj Pardasani
Katherine Briar-Lawson	John Herrick	Wilma Peebles-Wilkins
William Buffum	Alice K. Johnson	Dennis Peck
Iris Carlton-LaNey	Jill Jones	Philip Popple
Richard Caputo	Terry Jones	Jason L. Powell
Pranab Chatterjee	Nancy Jurik	Susan Robbins
Mary Jo Deegan	Marina Lalayants	Steven R. Rose
Luisa S. Deprez	Daniel Liechty	Fei Sun
Robert Fisher	Taryn Lindhorst	John Tropman
Sondra Fogel	Nick Mazza	John Williamson
Alejandro Garcia	Heather MacIndoe	Miu Chung Yan
Andrew Golub	Peter Meiksins	Saijun Zhang
Richard M. Grinnell, Jr.	James Midgley	

#### *Book Review Editors:*

Fei Sun, Michigan State University, and Daniel Liechty, Illinois State University.

Please mail books for review to: Fei Sun, School of Social Work, Michigan State University, 655 Auditorium Rd., Room 150, East Lansing, MI, 48824.

*The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* is published quarterly. Prior to copying items for educational classroom use, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA, 01923, or Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences (CC/S&BS), Institute for Scientific Information, 3501 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19104.

The Journal is abstracted and indexed in: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Elsevier Bibliographic Databases, Psychological Abstracts, Social Work Research & Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts.

Copyright © Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 2018

Special Issue on Dimensions of  
Charity versus Development

*Hector Luis Díaz and Antonio López Peláez,  
Special Issue Editors*

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| Dimensions of Charity versus Development:<br>The Century-Old Debate in the Profession of<br>Social Work | 3  |
| <i>Héctor Luis Díaz and Antonio López Peláez</i>  |    |
| Common Law, Charity and Human Rights<br>as Responses to the Socio-Economic Crisis<br>in Galicia, Spain  | 17 |
| <i>Francisco Xabier Aguiar Fernández, Santiago<br/>Prado Conde, and Carmen Verde Diego</i>              |    |
| Maximization vs. Inclusion as a Value Conflict<br>in Development Work                                   | 39 |
| <i>Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, Héctor Luis Díaz,<br/>and Vijayan Kumara Pillai</i>                          |    |
| Use of Technology, Pedagogical Approaches<br>and Intercultural Competence in Development                | 55 |
| <i>Dee Ann Sherwood, Marian Tripplett,<br/>Sarah Hoyle-Katz, and Joy Langereis</i>                      |    |
| The Debate on Minimum Income in Spain:<br>Charity, Development or Citizen Right                         | 77 |
| <i>Arantxa Hernández-Echegaray and<br/>Javier Pacheco-Mangas</i>  |    |
| Class Activist Lens for Teaching about Poverty  | 95 |
| <i>Susan Weinger and Linda Reeser</i>   |    |

International Service-Learning Trips: A Framework for Developing Cross-Cultural Competence <i>Mioara Diaconu, Laura Racovita-Szilagyi, and Aida Neacsu</i>	115
Knowledge Transfer for Full Citizenship: The Educational Model of Innovation in Social Work <i>Francisco Javier García-Castilla and Eloy Vírveda</i>	133
Global Interdependence and its Effects on Social Work Education in the United States <i>Mioara Diaconu, Laura Racovita-Szilagyi, and Samantha Graham</i>	151
The Importance of Social Work in the Latin American Association Movement of People Affected by Low Prevalence Diseases <i>Enrique Pastor Seller, Juan Carrión Tudela, and Antonio M. Bañón Hernández</i>	169
Assisting the Most Vulnerable Populations in the Regions of La Rioja and the Maghreb: the Human Rights-Based Approach and Social Work <i>Neus Caparrós Civera, Domingo Carbonero Muñoz, and Esther Raya Díez</i>	187
Social Work and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities in Mexico: Hidden Barriers <i>María del Carmen Martín Cano and Yolanda María de la Fuente Robles</i>	211

Due to the level of response on this special issue topic, the book review section has been excluded from this issue. It will return in the June 2018 issue.



# Dimensions of Charity versus Development: The Century-Old Debate in the Profession of Social Work

Héctor Luis Díaz  
*Western Michigan University*

Antonio López Peláez  
*Universidad Nacional de Educación a la Distancia*

*The social work profession seeks different objectives and utilizes different methodologies and interventions in the countries in which it operates around the world. Furthermore, it operates within drastically different political, economic and cultural contexts. For these reasons, it is difficult to identify an ideal universal method of intervention. For approximately a century, social work practitioners and academicians have debated whether the profession should focus its efforts on providing charity and relief services or promoting socio-economic development and self-sufficiency. This article defines the concepts of charity and socio-economic development and analyzes the main dimensions of this debate in an effort to deepen our understanding of how to best promote the well-being of individuals and communities.*

*Key Words: Charity, social development, social work, social policy*

## Introduction

Social work is an academic discipline and a profession directly linked to social welfare and related social protection systems. For these reasons, as an applied social science, social work seeks to increase its body of knowledge while promoting social, economic and political changes. These efforts are guided by professional codes of ethics, and are reflected in the proposals and interventions put forth by national and international social work organizations. Furthermore, throughout its professional history, social work's commitment to social welfare has been evident by its focus on working with the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, and by intervening with individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole (Zastrow, 2003).

Concerns over social integration, assimilation, poverty and other social ailments are not exclusive to social work, even though the values of altruism, generosity and compassion have been associated with our discipline since its very inception (Lubove, 1965). These values were also shared by other organizations that emerged at the same time as the Charity Organization Societies and the Settlement House Movement. Paul Harris, for instance, founded the Rotary Club in Chicago in 1905. This club promoted collaboration among professionals in an effort to respond to social problems. This included, among other things, helping to find a vaccination for polio. In 1917, Melvin Jones created (also in Chicago) the Lions Club, which focused its efforts on service to society. The creation of these organizations built on the previously stated values and the long tradition of Christian and non-Christian religions of helping the poor. Today, countless religious, professional and civic organizations collaborate in the promotion of social well-being (Davis, 2013).

In this special issue of the *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, authors join the debate surrounding "Charity versus Development" as it relates to the profession of social work. This special issue contains selected peer-reviewed papers presented at the eighth International Conference of the European Social Research Council on Latin America (CEISAL by its initials in Spanish) that took place from June 28 to July 1, 2016 in Salamanca, Spain. This issue contains research and conceptual articles as well as case analyses describing best practices presented at this international conference.

*Charity, Development and Social Work*

The debate related to charity and development as an empowerment approach has existed in the profession of social work for more than a hundred years. We briefly describe the debate and define key concepts in this section as a preamble to our discussion.

According to Midgley, (1995, p. 8), "Social development is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with the dynamic process of economic development." Midgley (1997a, p. 86) also defines community development as an intervention that seeks to "foster development at the local level by involving people in a variety of economic, infrastructural, and social projects." Charity on the other hand, is defined as "generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering: aid given to those in need" Charity (n.d.).

Critics of charity or universal welfare assistance to the poor argue that such assistance is unnecessary and undesirable, that it weakens traditional institutions and destroys the recipients' desire and ability to provide for themselves (Mullaly, 2007, p. 85). The suggested implication is that ongoing charity or welfare assistance creates and perpetuates dependency. According to Mullaly (2007), conservatives oppose the existence of welfare systems that provide financial relief to the poor, while politicians that are more liberal support such systems in an attempt to counter the negative aspects of capitalism (pp. 89, 108). Midgley (1997b, pp. 14–15), in turn proposes social development as a viable alternative to "outdated consumption and maintenance oriented welfare programs." Sen (1999) warns us, however, that learning the difference between individual rights and capacities is necessary to understand the challenges presented by the process of social development.

We can also approach this debate from an angle that avoids the charity vs. development dichotomy (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Robbins, 2015). Recent research findings in the fields of biology and neurology strongly suggest that we, as human beings, have a basic inclination towards cooperation and altruism, which in turn are compatible with and necessary for our personal and social development. From a neurological perspective (Pfaff, 2015), as well as from a social work perspective (López-Pelaez, 2015),



strengthening our sense of altruism (the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others) is likely to increase our freedom instead of increasing our dependency. A strengthened sense of altruism should greatly enhance our personal and social functioning, and facilitate our collective efforts to improve our social well-being. We should not focus on charity or development as the defining element of social work's strategy and mission. Instead, we should adopt an approach that integrates relief services and development, as pertinent and needed. Such a strategy could enable us to take advantage of altruism as a motivator to any type of intervention and prepare us to better respond to the challenges presented by social welfare and the welfare state.

Given the challenges associated with finding common ground, Levinas (1993) recommends trying to understand the worldview of others as a strategy to help us reach agreements. Social research identifies altruism as a unifying element and requirement for our survival as a species in societies oriented towards competition, individualism and consumerism. It also proposes that cooperation must precede individuation. Reportedly, we must learn to coexist before we learn how to be different or apart from each other (Sennett, 2012). Cooperation is vital to our survival during our childhood as well as in our adult life, given that we cannot survive by ourselves. "The distribution of labor enables us to multiply our limited capacities" (Sennett, 2012, p. 107).

Cooperation is more than a social ability; it is a form of interaction that generates mutual benefits (Sennett, 2012). Cooperation, in turn, may be motivated by our sense of altruism, which is part of our cerebral structure and responds to our biological identity (Pfaff, 2015). Altruism and cooperation are directly linked to the notion of generosity, which seems to be the opposite of selfishness. Generosity has been defined as "the virtue or ability to provide resources to others freely and abundantly" (Smith & Davidson, 2014, p. 4). This virtue represents a vital human trait, not a specific or isolated donation or behavior. It is a virtue that implies regularity, repetition and consistency. Generosity is different from altruism in that generosity is compatible with self-interest while altruism is not. Generosity may express itself through providing financial assistance to others, serving as a volunteer, donating blood, providing loans and other support to family members, friends or organizations

(Smith & Davidson, 2014). Consistent with a deontological perspective, seeking the well-being of others is considered good in itself (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017)

Generosity promotes well-being and represents a way of life and of relating to others. Societies with a tendency towards individualism tend to criticize generosity, while valuing behaviors centered on individual well-being. This may be due to their reductionist view of generosity and altruism and their ignoring the positive impact of generous and altruistic behaviors on individuals and on society. This proposition is not value free, just as social policies and the welfare state are not value free (López Peláez & Segado, 2016). Generosity and altruism change our perception of self and force us to place the well-being of others before our personal well-being. In such a context, others are often viewed as obstacles or simply as competitors. This societal tendency may get in the way of other dimensions of generosity which are often present in our daily living.

Smith and Davidson (2014) have identified two dimensions associated with the phenomenon of generosity. The first is that generous behaviors contribute to our own well-being, even if we focus on the well-being of others. The second is that lack of generosity and concern for others leads to greater dissatisfaction and ill feelings in us. Smith and Davidson's research findings suggest a positive association between generosity and the personal well-being of generous persons (Smith & Davidson, 2014, p. 9).

The previously stated findings supporting the association between altruism and generosity do not represent the sole justification for the existence of social work as a profession. We do not formulate social welfare policies or provide social services because these actions will make us feel better or because this is consistent with particular religious beliefs. We formulate and implement policies guided by the desire to help human beings take advantage of their citizens' rights (Northern Ireland Civil Service, 2017).

The existing tension between charity and development, between providing immediate relief to others and empowering them to help themselves, between efforts to solve social problems and strategies to empower people in need, perpetuate this complex debate in social work circles (López Peláez, 2012). The welfare state and the helping professions stem from our respect

for citizens' rights and our desire to respond to their demands for goods and services (Northern Ireland Civil Service, 2017). The profession does not exist simply because of compassion for individuals or the desire to be helpful. For these reasons, social service programs provided by public agencies should be evaluated to make sure they do not simply represent charitable or philanthropic efforts and that instead they have positive long-term impacts.

The tension between charity and socio-economic development has existed in the United States since the 1880s. This tension originated between the Charity Organization Societies (COS) and the Settlement House movements that paved the way for the emergence of social work as a profession. The COS movement emerged in 1877 emphasizing the provision of charity to individuals they considered to be morally worthy of such assistance (Trattner, 1989). Mary Richmond founded this movement with the primary intervention strategy of sending friendly visitors to the homes of the poor to assess their level of need and worthiness for assistance through a method called scientific philanthropy. Jane Addams originated the Settlement House movement in the 1880s (Trattner, 1989). The primary goal of this movement was to help mostly European immigrants become part of the mainstream of American society. Their primary focus was to teach English to new immigrants and provide them with marketable skills that would enable them to obtain gainful employment. The movement also worked to eliminate laws that prevented the progress of the immigrants. The COS movement has been considered highly moralistic and reportedly discriminated against those that needed their services the most. The Settlement House movement, on the other hand, was criticized for discriminating against poor persons who were not European immigrants (Trattner, 1989), given that Native-Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics were not able to access their services.

For approximately a century, the social work profession in the United States has maintained a charity-development dualism. The type of practice of social workers in the United States today clearly shows the philosophical and ideological divide between supporters of charity and direct practice with individuals and families, and supporters of a macro and developmental approach. According to NASW (2013), approximately 93% of the 140,000 social workers in the country possess a clinical or direct

practice license. This means that the majority of social workers are primarily devoted to providing direct services to individuals and families. In the United States, direct social work practice usually takes the form of counseling, case management and/or provision of relief services. A very small percentage of social workers in the country engage primarily in administration, community practice, socio-economic development, or social policy practice (NASW, 2013).

### *Development and Charity: Social Work Perspectives*

Various factors and conditions have shaped our discipline and profession since its inception. While democracy and citizenship rights have led us to view individuals as subjects and masters of their own history, socio-economic inequality, poverty, social exclusion, and vulnerability have demanded macro or collective approaches to intervention. In response to these conditions, the first social workers responded to lack of democracy and vulnerability through scientific approaches, which in turn gave origin to our profession (Tannenbaum & Reisch, 2001).

As an applied social and behavioral science, social work seeks to respond to a multitude of social problems which are sources of great distress. Our relevance and legitimacy as a profession stem from the applied nature of our work and our constant efforts to find practical solutions to pressing social problems (Morales & Sheafor, 2004). To this end, social work aims at forming helping professionals and empowering citizens to act as such. Given our professional objectives, social work needs to rely on theories that validly describe, explain and predict social phenomena. Social work theories must have clear practice applications.

Social work research and teaching seek to promote critical thinking and form professionals capable of responding to pathology and dysfunction in the world. Social work professionals must confront old and new challenges and take advantage of opportunities. Our ability to anticipate and build a new future depends on the evaluation of our past and present, our constraints and possibilities, our individual and collective inertia, and our willingness to bring about change.

The future of the social sciences and social work, in particular, depends on our desire and commitment to increase our body of knowledge, respond to chaos, treat pathologies,

alleviate pain, and ameliorate injustice and inequality. For this reason, social work requires knowledge to guide our action, increase professionalization and transform living conditions. Consistent with these premises, the articles in this special issue ponder various dimensions of the charity versus development social work debate. Articles two to five are empirical and qualitative in nature. Articles six to nine are conceptual and present propositions that could be tested in future research. The last three articles are case analyses.

The qualitative article "Common Law, Charity and Human Rights as Responses to the Socio-Economic Crisis in Galicia, Spain" recognizes the need for government assistance to the poor and the unemployed in the form of housing and other relief services while asserting that this type of assistance is not sufficient to significantly change their condition. In addition to providing goods and services, the article proposes a focus on human rights and policies aimed at promoting the socio-economic development of poor persons and communities.

The article "Maximization vs. Inclusion as a Value Conflict in Development Work" is qualitative and is based on an international mixed methods research project. It proposes a model for addressing ethical issues in development work. It also recommends an approach to development that could improve the relationship between policy makers, development professionals, and participants in development programs.

The article "Use of Technology, Pedagogical Approaches and Intercultural Competence in Development" relies on mixed research methods. Its authors part from the premise that education is key to social and economic development. The article describes a unique cultural immersion course provided to social work students in the City of Chicago that included the use of technology, pedagogical approaches and intercultural education to increase levels of cultural competence.

The authors of "The Debate on Minimum Income in Spain: Charity, Development or Citizen Right?" conducted a qualitative study among a group of social workers in Spain. According to social workers interviewed for this study, they should primarily be agents for social change as opposed to agents for stability and social control. They view minimum income systems as a form of charity and a means for social control. As

an alternative, they propose family protection policies aimed at reducing social exclusion and vulnerability.

In “Class Activist Lens for Teaching about Poverty,” the authors propose a conceptual framework and model. They recommend a teaching and practice model aiming to equip students to understand poverty from a class perspective. The goal of the action component of the proposed model is to politicize practice, enable us to become allies with the poor, resist injustice, and promote social and economic development.

The authors of “International Service-Learning Trips: a Framework for Developing Cross-Cultural Competence” propose that students would benefit more from active involvement in needs assessments, appreciative inquiry, program design, program implementation, and evaluation of grassroots sustainable development efforts than from engaging in charitable endeavors. They explain how international exposure and well-crafted international service learning trips can assist in developing cross-cultural competence and the empowerment of individuals and communities to generate social change. The proposed model is consistent with best practices implemented during several international service learning trips and study tours. The framework is based on a human rights and sustainable development approach.

In “Knowledge Transfer for Full Citizenship: The Educational Model of Innovation in Social Work,” the authors describe various academic and professional experiences and propose a model for education transfer and innovation in social work. The article builds on the notion that increased information and knowledge are essential prerequisites for the development of all aspects of modern societies. To this end, social work is encouraged to maintain and improve channels of communication and knowledge transfer in academia and in professional practice.

The article “Global Interdependence and its Effects on Social Work Education in the United States” proposes a rights-based development model as opposed to a charity-based approach. It provides a rationale for implementing a global perspective in social work education while identifying sustainable development as consistent with social work values and mission. The article discusses the implications of online/distance education for international social work practice. It discusses the implications



of globalization and global interdependence for social work theory, policy, and practice, while stressing the need to incorporate these into field education.

The article "The Importance of Social Work in the Latin American Association Movement of People Affected by Low Prevalence Diseases" represents a case analysis of the Latin American rare diseases association movement. The article does not make direct or explicit reference to the concepts of charity or development, nevertheless, empowerment and development are implicit throughout the document. It emphasizes the need for a multifaceted strategy to tackle rare diseases through prevention, planning, and primary care. Such strategy should incorporate research, public health plans, defense of social and health rights, reliance on civic associations, and coordination between government agencies and representatives of civil society. Finally, the article highlights the key role that social workers play in the rare diseases association movement in Latin America.

In the article "Assisting the Most Vulnerable Populations in the Regions of La Rioja and the Maghreb: The Human Rights-Based Approach and Social Work," the authors applied a case-analysis methodology to interventions sponsored by the European Union and by UNICEF to combat poverty in the Spanish region of La Rioja, Spain. One of the interventions involves many universities from Spain and northern Africa. Many residents of La Rioja migrated there from the Maghreb region of northern Africa and represent one of the region's most vulnerable groups. In these two cases, the Human Rights Based Approach represents a significant strategy for promoting people's autonomy and an effective way of fighting inequality, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations.

Finally, the article "Social Work and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities in Mexico: Hidden Barriers" analyzes the progress made towards the goal of full inclusion of persons with disabilities into Mexican society. Reportedly, Mexico has made significant progress in the development of programs for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, in spite of the considerable progress made, there are still invisible or hidden barriers the country needs to overcome. The social integration of persons with disabilities is seen as an indicator of the country's level of social development

## Conclusion

The various articles presented during the symposium *Charity vs. Development: What should be the mission and strategy of the social work profession?*, have made evident our need to reinvent social work to more effectively respond to emerging problems and needs (Featherstone, 2011). Furthermore, social work as a profession and a discipline should continue to be supported by quality standards, planning, intervention and scientific evaluation.

According to López-Peláez (2012), our profession faces multiple challenges. First, it must reformulate social welfare policies and redefine social work practice consistent with the socio-cultural, political and economic context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It must also respond to the demands of citizenship through new rights, services and entitlements. Furthermore, social work as a profession must redefine itself in order to survive in a highly bureaucratic context in which government transfers responsibility for social welfare to volunteer organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Lastly, the profession should promote quality higher education for social workers. Many countries do not offer social work university degrees, while other countries only provide social workers with technical or paraprofessional education (Garber, 1997). In contrast, universities in other countries like the United States and Spain offer bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in social work.

The case of Spain shows that our profession has become more and more bureaucratic. The limited number of social workers in the country are forced to devote the bulk of their time and efforts to charity and relief efforts. This leaves them with little or no time to seek significant social, political, or economic change. To complicate matters, available resources for social welfare have been diminishing, when in the past ever-increasing resources was the norm. Spain is currently facing times of human service retrenchment and austerity. This is having a direct impact on professional social workers who work for private or public organizations which are forced to restructure and reorganize in an effort to maintain predetermined levels of service.

The challenges faced by our profession in the United States include the increasing number of persons who live by themselves, greater social exclusion, and the precarious living conditions of a

significant segment of the population. These circumstances strongly suggest the need to concentrate our efforts on promoting the self-sufficiency and socio-economic development of individuals and communities, consistent with the concept of citizens' rights.

In the end, acknowledging the humanity of others will enable us to evolve from charity to the promotion of human rights. Our goal should not only be to solve problems but to empower individuals, groups and communities to take control of their lives. We must overcome false dichotomies such as "charity vs. development" and develop new theories, methodologies and practice interventions that will enable us to improve the living conditions for all.

## References

- Charity (n.d.) In Merriam-Webster's online dictionary (updated: 8 March 2018). Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/charity>.
- Davis, N. S. (2013). A heavenly collaboration: Social workers and churches working to increase advance directive completion among African American elderly. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 23(4), 462–274. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2013.772415>
- Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2017). Deontological ethics. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/deontological-ethics>
- Featherstone, B. (2011). The current economic crisis in Ireland: Why social work needs to be part of the challenge to a discredited system. *Comunitania. Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Ciencias Sociales*. [Comunitania: International Journal of Social Work and Social Sciences], 1, 17–29.
- Garber, R. (1997). Social work education in an international context: Current trends and future directions. In M. C. Hokenstad and J. Midgley (Eds.), *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* (pp. 159–172). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Midgley, J. (1995). *Social development: The developmental perspective in social welfare*. London: Sage.
- Midgley, J. (1997a). *Social welfare in global context*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Midgley, J. (1997b). Social work and international social development: Promoting a developmental perspective in the profession. In M. C. Hokenstad and J. Midgley (Eds.), *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* pp. 11–26. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: The Chicago University Press.

- Levinas, E. (1993). *Entre nosotros: Ensayos para pensar en otro*. Madrid: Pre-textos.
- López-Peláez, A. (2012). Profession, science and citizenship. Challenges for social work and social services in the 21st Century. *Azarbe. Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Bienestar*, 1, 61–71.
- López-Peláez, A. (2015). *Teoría del Trabajo Social con Grupos*, 2ª ed. [Theory of social work with groups (2nd ed.)]. Madrid: Universitas.
- López-Peláez, A., & Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo, S. (2016). The ailing welfare State. An introduction. In S. Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo and A. López Peláez (Eds.), *The ailing welfare state* (pp. 21–32). Pamplona: Thomson Reuters /Aranzadi.
- Lubove, R. (1965). *The professional altruist: The emergence of social work as a career, 1890-1930*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morales, A. T. and Sheafor, B. W. (2004). *Social work: A profession of many faces*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Mullaly, B. (2007). *The new structural social work*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Northern Ireland Civil Service. (2017). *Human rights guide*. Retrieved from <http://nicshumanrightsguide.com/policy-human-rights>
- NASW (2013). NASW membership. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkers.org/pressroom/features/general/nasw.asp>
- Pfaff, D. W. (2015). *The altruistic brain. How we are naturally good*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robbins, S. P. (2015). From the Editor—The red pill or the blue pill? Transcending binary thinking. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(1) 1–4.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sennett, R. (2012). *Juntos. Rituales, placeres y política de cooperación*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- Smith, C., & Davidson, H. (2014). *The paradox of generosity. Giving we receive, grasping we lose*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tannenbaum, N., & Reisch, M. (2001). From charitable volunteers to architects of social welfare: A brief history of social work. *Ongoing Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://issuu.com/uofmsocialwork/docs/fall-2001/?e=6822268/4916618>
- Trattner, W. I. (1989). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press.
- Zastrow, C. H. (2003). *The practice of social work: Applications of generalist and advanced content*. Pacific Grove, CA: Thomson-Brooks/Cole.



# Common Law, Charity, and Human Rights as Responses to the Socio-Economic Crisis in Galicia, Spain

Francisco Xabier Aguiar Fernández  
*Universidade de Vigo*

Santiago Prado Conde  
*Universidad Internacional de la Rioja*

Carmen Verde Diego  
*Universidade de Vigo*

*This article presents the findings of a research project analyzing the effects of the Spanish socio-economic crisis on rural areas. It describes the perceptions of social workers in the public sector engaged in community practice and the perceptions of social leaders working for public and private human service organizations within the province of Ourense, Spain. It explores how the current economic crisis has affected people, health care units and the social workers' scope of action. The study relied on secondary data, surveys and qualitative interviews. Study findings suggest that the adopted measures for responding to the effects of the crisis have been scarce. The primary responses to the crisis include privatization of human services and the transfer of responsibility from government to civil society organizations. Instead of focusing on charity, this study in Galicia, Spain proposes a greater focus on rural social work and on the promotion and defense of human rights by civic and other organizations.*

*Keywords: crisis, social services, rural areas, social work, human rights.*



## Literature Review

The effects of the socio-economic crisis—known as the ‘Great Recession’ (Jenkins, Brandolini, Micklewright & Nolan, 2013) due to its global dimension, depth and prolonged duration—produced a decrease of the purchasing power on a large part of the population in Spain. It also created a context of economic precariousness that generated a very sharp increase in the levels of social exclusion, as well as an increase in the number of households below the poverty line (Laparra, 2010; Laparra & Pérez, 2011, 2012; López & Renes, 2011a, 2011b). Zurdo and Serano (2013) emphasize the social over the economic dimension, given the impact of the recession on the living conditions of citizens and on social cohesion. In Spain, the unemployment rate tripled between 2007 and 2012. The rate went from 8.4% to 23.8% (INE—National Institute of Statistics, 2012), and youth unemployment increased to 57%. Moreover, both labor precariousness and the number of workers living in poverty also increased (Aragón et al., 2012). According to the *Survey on Living Conditions* (INE, 2015), the vast majority of households in several Spanish autonomous communities struggled to make ends meet. These include the Canary Islands (80%), Andalusia (77%), Valencia (76.4%), and Ceuta (76.2%); Navarra, the best faring region in Spain, has a 35% poverty rate. In the third quarter of 2013, the INE calculated that 651,200 Spanish households did not have at least one employed family member. By May 2015, this number had increased to 770,000 households, or 11.5% of the 6.7 million households in Spain. “Absolute unemployment” mainly means households without any type of gainful employment. By 2013, the Spanish Foundation for the Promotion of Social Studies and Applied Sociology (FOESSA) reported 580,000 households without any type of income coming from work or social security system protection funds (FOESSA, 2013).

The *Survey on Living Conditions* (INE, 2015) calculated the existence of 4,000,000 households below the poverty level. This is approximately 25% of the total Spanish population. The official government source, Eurostat, also estimates that a quarter of the Spanish population lives in relative or severe poverty (Eurostat, 2015). While poverty has had a devastating impact on families, its impact on children and youth has been even more alarming. According to Eurostat (2015), 29.9 % of children and

the young population live in relative poverty. This places Spain as the European country, after Romania (34.6%), with the second highest child poverty rate.

Because of poverty, many families are unable to make the rental or mortgage payments for their homes, leading to a still unknown number of evictions. In 2013, the General Council of the Judiciary produced a report that reconciled data from the Association of Property Registrars, the Bank of Spain, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) and its own judicial statistics. They identified 75,375 settled foreclosures and 198,076 pending foreclosures in 2012 alone. Almost 80% were working or middle class households. Families were also unable to pay for their household energy expenses (Consejo General del Poder Judicial, 2013). According to the FACUA consumer organization, in 2013 the electric energy service was disconnected to more than a million families, out of 23.5 million (FACUA, 2014).

Finally, the current economic crisis in Spain has led to the polarization of society and a growing income gap between the rich and the poor. Such polarization has been fuelled by factors such as fiscal adjustments, tax increases and social cuts. In Spain, 10% of the lowest income households lost 13% of their annual income between 2007 and 2011, compared to the loss of only 1.5% of their annual earnings for the 10% richest households (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2015). As the OECD has pointed out, during the last few years, social inequality has grown the most in Spain, as compared to other European countries.

In spite of the ongoing socio-economic crisis and high levels of unemployment, the European Union has implemented neo-liberal and neoconservative austerity policies and has adopted a different view towards social welfare (Del Pino & Rubio, 2013). Several authors have examined the evolution of the welfare system in Spain and have denounced the current dismantling of the welfare system (Álvarez, 2009; Barrera-Algarín, Malagón-Bernal & Sarasola-Sánchez, 2013; Fernández, 2012; García, 2011; Recio, 2010; Urteaga, 2012). Others have focused on the effects of austerity social policies on social work and social services (Abad & Martín, 2015; Alguacil, 2012; Barriga, 2012; Díaz, 2012; Lima, 2011; Lima, Verde, & Pastor, 2016; Pastor & Sánchez, 2013; Roldan & Castanyer, 2012; Santos, 2011; Serrano et al., 2011).

According to Abad and Martín (2015), “precarity policy” has been used to manage precariousness in the new crisis context and within the framework of current neoliberal policies. These two authors believe that the current economic crisis has led to structural or systemic violence against the population. Such violence has taken the form of privatization of social services and psychologization of uncertainty and precariousness. Privatization refers to a redefinition of our concept of social responsibility and to the transfer of the responsibility for human services to the private sector. Netto (2002) calls this process re-philanthropization, which he sees as a justice duty and a moral duty. Psychologization refers to the process of conceptualizing a social problem as a problem of the individual, who must ultimately be responsible for solving it (Beck, 1998).

According to Mata and Pallarés (2014), while historically social welfare has emphasized charity, we are now moving in the opposite direction. The State’s withdrawal from social welfare contributes to the privatization of universal social services and to transferring the responsibility from government to civil society or the voluntary sector. Hence, the growing institutionalization of food distribution programs allows politicians to disregard lack of food as a social problem (Riches & Silvasti, 2014). In the last few years, food banks have proliferated, demonstrating a solidarity pattern (Pérez de Armiño, 2014). Both the media and public administrations disseminate a distorted meaning of the term ‘solidarity,’ since the concept is only used to promote charity and individual altruism. As a result, the social relevance and visibility of philanthropic actions has increased (Mata & Pallarés, 2014).

The previously mentioned actions imply a desire of certain sectors to return to charity as a means to promote social welfare. It has been proposed, however, that charity is mainly individual, partial and not preventive. It is not consistent with the spirit of Spanish law or with a universal social protection system. Charity may be seen as part of the State’s transition from an emphasis on the collective to an emphasis on the individual and from security to insecurity (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2004).

As Poppendieck (1999) warned, the proliferation of charity contributes to society’s failure to effectively and significantly deal with poverty. Charity helps alleviate political pressure, while finding solutions that are more relevant. Additionally, it helps soothe the conscience and reduce the discomfort

provoked by visible misery. Moreover, the creation of a charity culture normalizes mendicity and legitimizes personal generosity as a response to social and economic dislocation.

Given this reversion of rights, several authors propose social work practice based on human rights (Staub-Bernasconi, 2016; Verde, 2016; Wronka, 2014, 2016). The human rights perspective provides meaning and guidance to social policies and interventions, given that human rights are guaranteed and legitimized by the international community. The previously mentioned authors propose a comprehensive perspective and a complete system based on human rights principles, rules and standards. Furthermore, Staub-Bernasconi (2016) highlights that human rights and social work are historical allies.

For Ife (2016), the relationship between social work and human rights can be approached in two ways: by means of the worldwide participation in human rights campaigns, or by means of social work for ensuring human rights. In the second case, the author proposes an approach that is based more on humanities and less on an anthropocentric worldview that limits a liberal and individual building of human rights.

The previous literature review served as the basis for this research project aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the scope and effects of the current economic crisis in the province of Ourense, located in the autonomous region of Galicia in northwest Spain. This article is based on data collected from rural or highly dispersed rural areas in the province of Ourense. Ourense is characterized by a sizeable elderly population, and a context of abandonment and depopulation prior to the economic crisis, which has been in existence for a few decades. This article describes the effects of the crisis on community social services in rural areas. It identifies the responses and measures already under way, both from the public sector and from other social organizations. It focuses on the perceptions of social workers in these areas and on how the crisis has affected people and the work of professional social workers. Finally, the article provides recommendations for interventions for the targeted rural areas. We hope the study findings will motivate us to reflect on the role of community social services and social workers in rural areas.

## Social Services in Rural Areas

The system of social services emerged in Spain in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coinciding with the beginning of the democratic period. Throughout these years, the system has developed significantly to the point of being recognized as a fundamental instrument of the welfare state (Uceda, 2011). Article 148.1 of the Spanish Constitution transferred this function and responsibility to the autonomous communities. This has produced significant inequalities among the autonomous communities. According to Vila (2012), despite their conceptual and organizational similarities, 17 different social service systems have been developed in the regions of Spain.

The first study using the Law, Economy, Coverage (LEC) index was conducted in 2012 by the Association of Social Services Directors and Managers. It sought to measure the development of social services in Spain. It found a weak general development of social services in the whole country, as well as a huge disparity of efforts, coverage and rights between the different regions. Moreover, the data from 2012 to 2015 suggests a deterioration of the system and extraordinary disparity in terms of funding and program development. Between 2011 and 2013, the country's annual expenditure on social services was reduced by 13.3%, while the expenditures of local governments increased by 20.8% (Asociación de Directores y Gerentes de Servicios Sociales, 2015).

The Spanish welfare state is centered on the family, consistent with the Mediterranean style. In this type of system, the family is an important supporter, welfare provider and distributor. This system is based on an ideological and political view that legitimizes family strategies based on intergenerational micro solidarity and gender (Naldini, 2002). The *VIII Report of the Social Reality Observatory* (Caritas, 2013) reported an exceedingly high Spanish family protective capacity and described its survival strategies in the face of the crisis. Consistent with this notion, the first report on social services in Spain produced by the Labor General Council found that cuts in social welfare benefits, tightening of eligibility requirements and delays in the processing of social benefits had an even bigger negative impact on social vulnerability and on the financial burdens carried by families (Lima, 2014).

The last economic crisis is a global phenomenon that has worsened the living conditions of a large number of people and populations (Sassen, 2010). The unceasing process of economic development and globalization has had an effect on rural areas in particular. Furthermore, changes in traditional agricultural societies have generated economic and social transformations (Buckwell, 2006).

Today more than ever, rural societies are immensely heterogeneous. The complexities of such societies make their analysis more difficult. The boundaries between rural and urban areas are no longer clear, and migration patterns do not always flow in the same direction (Camarero, Sampedro, & Oliva, 2011). New migrants include former rural dwellers, retired people and newcomers without previous family or affective bonds. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to take these factors into consideration and identify the new rurality (Roseman, Prado, & Pereiro, 2013). We must identify and understand new lifestyles and ways of relating to one another, the needs of farmers, the possibilities for diverse economic activity, and a future where local and global concerns overlap (Alonso & Conde, 1996). This will hopefully lead to bringing together persons from seemingly separate worlds and helping them become part of the same “multicultural, multilingual, multiracial, multimedia and maybe also multipurpose” society (Camarero 1996, p. 125).

Various authors have expressed their social concern for rural problems and have acknowledged the need to formulate economic and social policies aimed at supporting the rural population (González Regidor, 2008; Márquez, 2002; Moyano, 2005). In the opinion of Rico & Gómez Limón (2008) we need to learn how society perceives rural social problems, and we must agree on rural development policy goals and strategies. This information will hopefully facilitate the formulation and implementation of citizen-centered rural development policies. For Juste, Gómez, and Fernández (2011), local rural development must take multiple factors into account. Successful policies will require considerable economic resources as well as social cohesion.

Social service providers must remain aware of their roles and potential contributions. They represent key players in the area's development. De la Rosa, Rueda, de la Red and Prieto (1995) consider that the need for multidimensional interventions from social service providers is more obvious in rural areas,



given the decentralization of problems and resources. For this reason, we need new approaches for the study of rural contexts, for resource organization and for local service coordination.

We must also keep in mind the particular features and determining factors of social services in rural areas. Morales (2007) found that social services in rural areas have a substantially lower level of development than their urban counterparts. This may be due to: (a) the inadequacy of urban social policies for the rural context; (b) the ignorance of some social service professionals of the socio-structural context and social problems of rural areas; (c) the absence of a proper alignment between social policies in rural areas and wider development policies; (d) physical distance, and (e) lack of coordination of the different rural councils.

Rural areas should not be understood merely from a geographical point of view. They should also be seen as the result of historical and cultural methods of production. According to Besada, Castro, and Rodríguez (1999), the daily activities of social workers must revolve around the special needs of specific groups in rural areas. The needs and demands will vary depending on the different rural environments and on the territory's socio-economic structure and characteristics; therefore, programs designed for each reality are required. A community approach to individuals and groups is needed for active participation in rural activities.

Rural community development presents complex challenges that cannot be exclusively dealt with at the level of the individual. The overlap between community development practices and human rights principles is increasingly recognized by the United Nations. Both human development and human rights aim at promoting welfare and liberty based on the dignity and the inalienable equality of every person (ONU, 2009).

The market economic model hinders the implementation of a genuine human development model for rural populations focused on self-management, self-reliance and empowerment. Given the reproduction of the current economic system, we need alternatives based on human development in line with Max-Neef (1986). A focus on human development is an alternative to the neoliberal economic model that requires dynamic cultural processes that recognize the rural population as subjects of development.

Social workers play a vital role in making many people aware that they are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Such awareness may be created through individual and collective methods. The empowerment approach, the strengths and the freedom for working with individuals, families, groups and communities transcend the micro-macro distinction (Sewpaul & Larsen, 2014). Consistent with this, Healy (2008) and Wronka and Staub-Bernasconi (2012) propose that the social worker needs to be aware of his/her human rights practices and must generate interventions that promote ongoing social change. Social workers can promote social, economic, cultural and environmental development while supporting the Social Work Global Agenda (IASSW/IFSW, 2012). It is important to stress the role of social workers that are politically and humanely committed to producing social change aimed at peace, social democracy, human development and human rights (Sewpaul, 2015).

In Galicia, like in the rest of the country, Law 13/2008, regulating social services, passed on December 3, 2008 and provided for two types of care: community services and specialized services. The first has a predominantly local character and refers to a certain territory and population. Councils represent the basic planning entity for community social services (Ley 13/2008). The existence of social workers in rural councils responds to Decree 9/2012, enacted on March 16, 2012, calling for the regulation of community social services and their functioning (Decreto 9/2012). This was consistent with Law 13/2008, of December 3, 2008, regulating the social services in Galicia.

The enactment of Law 27/2013, *Rationalization and Sustainability of the Local Administration*, by the Popular Party endangered many community services nationwide, as well as the local network of social services (Ley 27/2013). Local municipalities and rural councils with lower population were most affected by this law. Although most autonomous regions enacted laws and moratoria that ignored the dispositions of this law, authors such as Uceda et al. (2013) and Boix (2015) are greatly concerned about the reduction of the municipal skill-based approach and about a strategy that outsources services and moves them away from citizens, because these ignore the social and territorial cohesion of rural communities.

## Community Social Services in the Rural Areas of the Province of Ourense Facing the Socio-Economic Crisis

### *Research Design*

The research study was conducted between 2014 and 2015. It started with an exploratory study and included secondary sources of data. Secondary sources provided data on the elderly, unemployment rates, province councils, household composition and habits, people with special needs, and people with difficulties making ends meet. Based on that information, the research project was structured into two segments: questionnaires mailed to social workers employed by rural councils and qualitative fieldwork.

First, questionnaires were mailed to social workers employed by rural councils. All social work council members were contacted by telephone before questionnaires were mailed to them. The members of 35 rural and highly dispersed rural councils responded to the questionnaire. Questionnaires were organized in five sections: (1) perceptions of professionals about the early stages of the crisis and its consequences; (2) typology of users based on old and new needs; (3) perceptions of professionals related to people's socio-economic strategies; (4) institutional resources and support measures in response to the crisis; and (5) professionals' recommendations. The questionnaires served as a starting point for conducting comprehensive interviews.

The qualitative fieldwork consisted of interviews of social workers and other key informants. Metropolitan, suburban, rural and highly dispersed rural areas were taken into account while trying to calculate the number of social workers that would be needed to staff rural councils. The number of inhabitants in a specific geographic area determines the number of social workers, and the numbers are broken down as follows: less than 2,000, 2,000–4,999, 5,000–11,999, and 12,000–20,000 inhabitants. Two interviews were conducted in urban areas and two interviews in metropolitan areas. In the province of Ourense, the city of Ourense is the only population center with more than 20,000 inhabitants. The city and its metropolitan area comprise 30% of the province's population. Nine interviews

were conducted in rural areas where the majority of the councils in the province are located. One interview was conducted in a highly dispersed rural area. Eight interviews were conducted with key informants and selected leaders. These included directors of social services and non-governmental organizations and representatives of rural and neighborhood associations.

### *From Common Law to Charity*

In the opinion of social work respondents in rural councils, the Spanish economic crisis took place mostly between 2009 and 2011. Reportedly, the crisis resulted in: (1) more people needing assistance after their unemployment benefits were depleted; (2) an increase in the number of family reunifications; (3) budgets cuts; and (4) decreased access to available social service resources.

The implementation of the Law 39/2006, 14th of December 2006, titled *Promotion of the Personal Care and Autonomy for Dependent People*, requires the delivery of new services (Ley 39/2006). This law sees bureaucratization as an obstacle to social service delivery and not as a guarantee of it, given that bureaucratization is often associated with lack of knowledge of people's current needs at the autonomous community level.

Many social workers identified the elderly as the group most affected by the crisis (29.4%). As a result, many of them ended up needing rural community social services. The elderly are the most frequent users of services. However, underage youths (26.5%), middle-aged people between 35 and 50 years old (17.6%) and unemployed families with children (14.7%) were also identified as being negatively affected by the crisis.

The consensus of the interviewed rural social workers was that resources and benefits provided to families in response to the crisis have been very scarce. Furthermore, 85.7% of these workers believe that such resources and benefits were not adequate to ameliorate the conditions of vulnerability in which many people found themselves. People's basic needs were not being met. They viewed the financial relief and related services as short-term or restrictive welfare measures. The provided resources were not adequately planned or adapted to the needs of rural communities.

Some of the most commonly reported difficulties were:

- Reduction of human resources, benefits and services, even when the number of people in need had increased;
- Tightening of eligibility requirements for services that left many people and families without services;
- Slowness and delays in the processing and provision of social benefits;
- Auditing of service delivery expenses and increases in workload that restricted and slowed down service and aid delivery; and
- Measures were too isolated and too welfare and palliative-oriented, without any real joint work with families aimed at overcoming their difficulties.

More than a third of the interviewed social workers (35%) indicated that their councils did not create any specific programs to assist people who were most vulnerable from crisis-related issues. On the contrary, cuts in social services and rigid controls of expenditures by the local administration limited municipal emergency benefits and programs, which were already more limited in rural councils. In some cases, budget line items aimed at responding to immediate and urgent needs disappeared.

Professional workers identified specific initiatives aimed at easing the effects of the crisis and meeting basic needs. These included: increasing municipal funds for social emergency programs; entering into cooperation agreements with entities such as the Food Bank or foundations to supply products; collaborating with companies and associations for the distribution of non-perishable food; and the creation of flea markets, charity wardrobes, and food and toys collection campaigns at Christmas time, etc.

One of the main responses to the crisis has been the privatization of social services. Because of this, the responsibility for the provision of human services was transferred to third sector

entities and to informal networks. Large organizations such as the Red Cross, Caritas or the Food Bank, and others present in certain shires noticeably increased their social emergency programs. During the crisis, all of them increased their provincial activities in order to reach rural councils. This led to the creation of new local headquarters in main shire's settlements and to the reinforcement or creation of new emergency aid programs such as invoice and rental payment, among others.

Reportedly, the programs and assistance provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are very diverse. They range from economic aid for responding to basic needs to more specialized interventions. Contrary to what happens in public or governmental organizations, NGOs' eligibility requirements are more flexible and the processing of requests for benefits is significantly faster; that is why NGOs are often responsible for responding to the most urgent needs.

All social workers that participated in this study admitted that, since the beginning of the crisis, they have referred clients to non-governmental organizations, mainly because of the lack of prompt responses from public administrations. Most referrals have been made to the Red Cross (35%), Caritas (30%) and the Food Bank (22.5%), depending on the distance to each of them in any given council. Residents are often referred to parishes and, to a lesser extent, to neighborhood and rural women's associations. Referrals are quite common when looking for prompt solutions not readily available within the public sector. Referrals are made in spite of the workers' reluctance to encourage charity. They make the referrals because they view the provision of assistance as a right: "You refer much more to other organizations such as Caritas or the Red Cross. Now we coordinate much more at a professional level. But we continue processing the requests, because it is a right" (Social worker # 1).

Interviewed social workers highlight that mutual help has always existed in rural areas and that it has never disappeared. They make constant reference to the existence of family solidarity, the sharing of retirement pensions, and the self-consumption economy. All of these have softened the short-term consequences of the crisis for families.

The increase in requests for benefits, the lack of response from the administration, and increased bureaucratization and



inspection, have an emotional and physical effect on workers. Feelings of discomfort, helplessness or stress are common among these intermediaries between people seeking social services and administrations that see helping them as a priority, even though they do not provide adequate resources: "We have an incredible work overload. We do not have any sort of support from the administration. We suffer emotional costs because we see blatant situations which have no solution, helplessness" (Social worker # 2).

### *Recommendations of Social Workers for Rural Areas*

Recommended actions and strategies for rural councils related to social services and regional and national social policies include:

- Reduce the processing time of requests for services and the approval of aid and service delivery.
- Increase the number of social workers in rural councils and social budgets.
- Increase social emergency lines and aid to rural councils.
- Continue offering lunches in those schools already providing them.

Interviewed social workers identified the need to create jobs in the autonomous communities and nationally to generate economic resources and higher levels of social welfare. They assert that local and national governments must stop eliminating financial resources designated to social services and stop modifying social welfare policies and service delivery systems without any specialized knowledge, given that those actions hinder their work. Unfortunately, many legislators and bureaucrats responsible for policymaking do not know the social work profession and/or the realities of service users.

On the other hand, social workers' recommendations for highly dispersed rural councils highlight the need to respond to the needs of the elderly and migrant or incoming residents,

especially young adults and children. The recommendations include home care and a true residential and day care policy.

Contrary to lay or non-social work views, interviewed social workers believe housing opportunities for newcomers are scarce and for this reason they propose rental programs for rural areas. They also propose services for palliating social isolation at the provincial level. These include improving facilities in the neighborhoods, and providing means of transportation between councils and the main villages in the shire or neighboring villages for the purposes of work, school and medical care.

Social workers also proposed the promotion of cooperatives in an effort to promote economic development and economic self-sufficiency in the rural councils. They believe this would be the best way to create continuous, sustainable employment that attracts population. This will require however coordination with local development groups and agents. Furthermore, they believe more social work action at the community level is needed to counter the restrictions imposed on the profession by increased bureaucracy.

Finally, we should expand the scope of social policies at the regional and national levels to restore citizens' social rights, stimulate the economy, and modify recent regulations which content reveals lack of knowledge about social services and the socio-economic situation in the Spanish territories.

## Conclusion

Social policies and programs implemented by community social workers aimed at palliating the effects of the socio-economic crisis have primarily included privatization and the deterioration and elimination of guarantees and social rights. Noncompliance with laws related to plans, benefits and services have led to violation of the constitution and the neglect of the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Many social services, resources and benefits formerly provided by public agencies have been eliminated. Furthermore, many social service users have been criminalized through very perverse and exhausting inspections. Privatization has transferred much public responsibility for social welfare from public entities to non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, it has interfered with the family-based welfare model by delegating the

responsibility for public care to informal networks and micro solidarity mechanisms. The previously mentioned policies and practices are expected to impact social demographics given that they may lead to low birth rates, depopulation, abandonment of rural areas, elimination of equipment and resources, etc.

The findings of this study highlight the social concern about living conditions in rural areas, as well as the need to promote social and economic development in these territories. The most commonly reportedly problems in rural Spain include: the loss of population in rural areas; the outward migration of young people; the weakening of rural councils; social isolation and related difficulties; lack of transportation; and greater difficulties accessing needed resources. Because of these problems, new policies and strategies are needed to counter them. Furthermore, significant job creation is needed in rural areas to attract more population.

This study's findings about social workers' perceptions are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted in Spain such as the *II Report on Social Services in Spain* (Lima, 2015). According to that study, 73% of social workers agreed that policies and budget cutbacks implemented in response to the crisis violated the human rights of citizens.

The possibility of going back to the provision of social services based on charity and philanthropy makes the rights-based approach more necessary than ever. We need to guarantee equal access to social services and minimize social and economic inequality in rural areas. The constitutional support for the right to access social services, which is being promoted by social and academic organizations in Spain, can represent a solid foundation for this work.

The social work profession in Spain must focus on rural social work (Murty, 2005). This must include rural content on social work curricula as well as interventions addressing theoretical-methodological, ethical and political issues. According to Santos (2012), this process may start by acknowledging general and less significant realities. This may lead to substantially modifying the current perception of social services to something indispensable in Spanish society. This ideological and conceptual construction will require recovering traditional social values and interpreting them in a way that leads to human rights and to the integration of excluded minorities.

We agree with Abad & Martín (2015) in that the social deconstruction associated with the crisis places new demands on the profession of social work, given the profession's emphasis on emancipating and transforming social action. In addition to the human rights approach, an emphasis on community social work may represent the best way to contribute to the transformation and development of these rural territories. Hence, we as social workers must own and promote a human rights focus of social welfare and move in the opposite direction of the neoliberal emphasis on charity and budget cuts.

## References

- Abad, B., & Martín, J. (2015). El trabajo social ante la crisis. Nuevos retos para el ejercicio profesional de los y las trabajadoras sociales. *Cuadernos de trabajo social*, 28(2), 175–185.
- Alguacil J. (2012). La quiebra del incompleto sistema de Servicios Sociales en España. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 25(1), 63–74.
- Alonso, L. E., & Conde, F. (1996). Las paradojas de la globalización: La crisis del Estado de Bienestar nacional y las regiones vulnerables. *Estudios Regionales*, 44, 87–124.
- Álvarez A. (2009). Crisis de la modernidad y objetivos de los servicios sociales. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 88, 65–80.
- Aragón, J., Cruces, J., De la Fuente, L., Martínez, A., Otaegui, A., & Llopis, E. (2012). *Trabajadores pobres y empobrecimiento en España*. Madrid: Colección Estudios, 56.
- Asociación de Directores y Gerentes de Servicios Sociales (2015). *Indice de Desarrollo de los Servicios Sociales—DEC 2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.directoressociales.com/images/INDICEDEC/Folleto%20Indice%20DEC%202015.pdf>
- Barrera-Algarín E., Malagón-Bernal J. L., & Sarasola-Sánchez J. L. (2013). La deconstrucción del Estado de Bienestar: Cambios en el ejercicio profesional de los trabajadores sociales y aumento del voluntariado social. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 26(1), 115–126.
- Barriga, L. (2012). La protección a las situaciones de quiebra económica de particulares. Un desafío para los Servicios Sociales en España. *AZARBE. Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Bienestar*, 1, 21–38.
- Beck, U. (1998). *La sociedad del riesgo. Hacia una nueva modernidad*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Besada, L., Castro, M. J., & Rodríguez, C. (1999). Trabajo social en medio rural. In D. Colom & M. Miranda (Dir.), *Poblaciones y bienestar* (pp. 21–37). Zaragoza: Mira Editores.

- Boix, A. (2015). La reforma local de 2013 y sus consecuencias sobre la prestación de servicios públicos. In J. Romero & A. Boix (Eds.), *Democracia desde abajo. Nueva agenda para el gobierno local. Políticas públicas, cohesión social y buen gobierno en la Comunidad Valenciana tras la reforma del régimen local* (pp. 61–78). Valencia: Universitat de Valencia.
- Buckwell, A. (2006). Rural development in the EU. *Economía agraria y Recursos naturales*, 6(12), 93–120.
- Camarero, L. A. (1996). El mundo rural en la era del ciberespacio: Apuntes de sociología rural. In M<sup>a</sup>. A. García de León (Ed.), *El campo y la ciudad* (pp. 123–152). Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Camarero, L. A., Sampedro, R., & Oliva, J.
- (2011). Foreigners, neighbours, immigrants: Translocal mobilities in rural areas in Spain. In Ch. Hedberg & R. M. do Carmo (Eds.), *Translocal ruralism. Mobility and connectivity in European rural space* (pp. 143–162). Dordrecht (Netherlands): Springer.
- Cáritas (2013). *VIII Informe del Observatorio de la Realidad Social*. Madrid: Cáritas Española. Retrieved from desire to <http://edit.um.es/exclusionsocial/files/2014/02/2013-Cáritas.pdf>
- Consejo general del poder judicial. (2013). Una aproximación a la conciliación de los datos sobre ejecuciones hipotecarias y desahucios. *Boletín Información Estadística*, 3, 1–9.
- De la Rosa, P., Rueda, J. M., de la Red, N., & Prieto, J. M. (1995). Servicios sociales en el medio rural. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 4(12), 17–36.
- Decreto 9/2012, de 16 de marzo, por el que se regulan los servicios sociales comunitarios y su financiamiento. Diario Oficial de Galicia, 63, de 30 de marzo de 2012.
- Del Pino, E., & Rubio, J. (2013). *Los Estados de Bienestar en la Encrucijada. Políticas Sociales en Perspectiva Comparada*. Madrid: Tecnos.
- Díaz, O. (2012). El trabajo social ante la crisis económica. *Portularia. Revista de Trabajo Social*, 12, 239–244.
- Eurostat. (2015). People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by income quintile and household type (ilc\_peps03). Retrieved from [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_peps03&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps03&lang=en)
- FACUA. (2014, December 16). Consumidores en Acción alerta de que las eléctricas cortaron la luz a más de un millón de familias durante 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.facua.org/es/noticia.php?Id=8999>
- Fernández, T. (2012). El estado de bienestar frente a la crisis política, económica y social. *Portularia. Revista de Trabajo Social*, 12, 12–20.
- FOESSA (2013). *Desigualdad y derechos sociales. Análisis y perspectivas*. Madrid: Cáritas. Retrieved from [http://www.caritas.es/noticias\\_tags\\_noticiaInfo.aspx?Id=6475](http://www.caritas.es/noticias_tags_noticiaInfo.aspx?Id=6475)

- García J. (2011). Crisis global y acción social. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 93, 93–110.
- González Regidor, J. (Ed.). (2008). *El futuro del medio rural en España*. Madrid: Consejo Económico y Social.
- Healy, L. (2008). Exploring the history of social work as a human rights profession. *International Social Work*, 51(6), 735–748.
- IASSW/IFSW. (2012). *Global agenda*. Retrieved from <http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/globalagenda2012.pdf>
- Jenkins, S. P., Brandolini, A., Micklewright, J., & Nolan, B. (2013). *The great recession and the distribution of household income*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Juste, J., Gómez, J., & Fernández, J. (2011). Economía social y desarrollo local/rural. Un análisis de sus sinergias. *Estudios de Economía Aplicada*, 29(1), 189–222.
- Ife, J. (2016). Human rights and social work: Beyond Conservative Law. *Journal Human Rights and Social Work*, 1, 3–8.
- INE. (2012). *Notas de prensa sobre la Encuesta a personas sin hogar en el año 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np761.pdf>
- INE. (2015). *Notas de prensa sobre la Encuesta de condiciones de vida (ECV)—2015*. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np969.pdf>
- Laparra, M. (Ed.). (2010). *El impacto de la crisis en la cohesión social de España*. Madrid: Fundación FOESSA y Cáritas.
- Laparra, M., & Pérez, B. (2011). *El primer impacto de la crisis en la cohesión social en España*. Madrid: Fundación FOESSA.
- Laparra, M., & Pérez, B. (Eds.) (2012). *Crisis y fractura Social en Europa. CaUnited Statess y efectos en España*. Barcelona: Obra Social La Caixa.
- Ley 39/2006, de 14 de Diciembre de 2006, de *Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia*. BOE, 299, de 15 de diciembre de 2006.
- Ley 13/2008, de 3 de diciembre, de *servicios sociales de Galicia*. Diario Oficial de Galicia, 245, de 18 de diciembre de 2008.
- Ley 27/2013, de 27 de diciembre, de *racionalización y sostenibilidad de la Administración Local*. BOE, 312, de 30 de diciembre de 2013.
- Lima, A. (2011). Servicios sociales, trabajo social y crisis. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 93, 83–92.
- Lima, A. (Ed.). (2014). *I Informe sobre los Servicios sociales en España*. Madrid: Consejo General del Trabajo social.
- Lima, A. (Ed.). (2015). *II Informe sobre los Servicios sociales en España*. Madrid: Consejo General del Trabajo social.
- Lima A., Verde, C., & Pastor, E. (2016). El trabajo social en los servicios sociales en España. In E. Pastor & L. Cano (Eds.), *Políticas e intervenciones sociales ante los procesos de vulnerabilidad y exclusión de personas y territorios: Un análisis comparado México-España*. (pp. 173–187). México: Dykinson.



- López, J., & Renes, V. (2011a). Los efectos de la crisis en los hogares: Nivel de integración y exclusión social. *Papeles de Relaciones Ecosociales y Cambio Global*, 113, 189–199.
- López, J., & Renes, V. (2011b). Una sociedad desbordada, Caritas ante la crisis: Diagnóstico y propuestas políticas. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 93, 67–82.
- Mata, A. & Pallarés, J. (2014). Del bienestar a la caridad. ¿Un viaje sin retorno?. *Aposta. Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 62, 1–23.
- Márquez, D. (Ed.). (2002). *Nuevos horizontes en el desarrollo rural*. Madrid: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía & Ed. Akal.
- Max-Neef, M. (1986). *Desarrollo a escala humana. Conceptos, aplicaciones y reflexiones*. Barcelona: Icaria.
- Moyano, E. (2005). Nuevas orientaciones de la política europea de desarrollo rural. *Revista de Fomento Social*, 238, 219–242.
- Morales, N. (2007). La idiosincrasia de los servicios sociales en el medio rural salmantino. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 20, 35–56.
- Murty, S. A. (2005). The future of rural social work. *Advances in Social Work*, 6(1), 132–144.
- Naldini, M. (2002). *The family in the Mediterranean welfare states*. London: Frank Cass.
- Netto, J. P. (2002). Reflexiones en torno a la «cuestión social». In J. P. Netto et al., *Nuevos escenarios y práctica profesional. Una mirada crítica desde el Trabajo Social* (pp. 9–29). Buenos Aires: Espacio.
- OECD. (2015). *Government at a glance 2015*. OECD Publishing, Paris. Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov\\_glance-2015-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en)
- ONU. (2009). *Preguntas Frecuentes sobre los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales. Folleto Informativo, n° 33*. Ginebra: Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los derechos Humanos. Retrieved from [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS33\\_sp.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS33_sp.pdf)
- Pastor, E., & Sánchez, M. (2013). Impacto de la crisis económica y los cambios en las políticas sociales en el perfil, necesidades y prestaciones de las personas usuarias de los servicios sociales municipales. Análisis de caso local en la Región de Murcia (España). *Alternativas: Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 20, 141–161.
- Perez de Armiño, K. (2014). Erosion of rights, uncritical solidarity and food banks in Spain. In G. Riches & T. Silvasti (Eds.), *First world hunger revisited. Food charity or the right to food?* (pp. 131–145). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Poppendieck, J. (1999). *Sweet charity: Emergency food and the end of entitlement*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Recio, C. (2010). Familismo, asistencialismo y precariedad. La configuración del empleo en el sector de atención a las personas en España. *Alternativas. Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 17, 19–44.

- Riches, G., & Silvasti, T. (Eds.). (2014). *First world hunger revisited. Food charity or the right to food?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rico, M., & Gómez-Limón, J. (2008). Sociedad y desarrollo rural en Castilla y León: Un estudio de opinión pública. *Boletín de la A.G.E.*, 48, 199–223.
- Rodríguez Cabrero, G. (2004). *El estado del bienestar en España: debates, desarrollo y retos*. Madrid, Fundamentos.
- Roldan E., & Castanyer, M. (2012). Servicios Sociales en tiempos de crisis. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 25(1), 13–17.
- Roseman, Sh. R., Prado, S., & Pereiro, X. (2013). Antropología y Nuevas Ruralidades. *Gazeta de Antropología*, 29(2). Retrieved from <http://www.gazeta-antropologia.es/?p=4290>
- Santos, J. (2011). Un relato para construir la crisis de la crisis. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 93, 111–124.
- Santos, J. (2012). *El cuarto Pilar. Un nuevo relato para los servicios sociales*. Madrid: Paraninfo.
- Sassen, S. (2010). A savage sorting of winners and losers: Contemporary versions of primitive accumulation. *Globalizations*, 7(1–2), 23–50.
- Serrano P., Martínez Y., Vázquez P., Rodiño A., López A., & García, G. (2011). La crisis vista desde abajo. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 93, 45–66.
- Sewpaul, V., & Larsen, A. K. (2014). Community development: Towards an integrated emancipatory framework. In A. K. Larsen, V. Sewpaul, & G. Oline (Eds.), *Participation in community work: International perspectives* (pp. 230–246). London: Routledge.
- Sewpaul, V. (2015). Neoliberalism. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 462–168). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Staub-Bernasconi, S. (2016). Social work and human rights—Linking two traditions of human rights in social work. *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 1(1), 40–49.
- Uceda, F. X. (2011). Los servicios sociales en España: Desarrollo y articulación en los nuevos escenarios. *Documentación Social*, 162, 235–258.
- Uceda, F. X. et al. (2013). Els serveis social municipals en risc de desaparició: L'avantprojecte de llei de racionalització i sostenibilitat de la administració local. *Revista TS Nova*, 1, 9–22.
- Urteaga, E. (2012). Los Estados de Bienestar ante la globalización. *Portularia. Revista de Trabajo Social*, 12, 47–52.
- Vila, A. (2012). La nueva generación de leyes autonómicas de servicios sociales (2006–2011): Análisis comparativo. Azarbe. *Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Bienestar*, 1, 143–156.

- Verde, C. (2016). Un relato sobre la vinculación entre el trabajo social y los derechos sociales. *RTS: Revista de Treball Social*, 207, 21–39.
- Wronka, J., & Staub-Bernasconi, S. (2012). Human rights. In K. Lyons, T. Hokenstad, M. Pawar, N. Huegler, & N. Hall (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of international social work* (pp. 70–84). London: Sage Publications.
- Wronka, J. (2014). Human rights as the bedrock of social justice: Implications for advanced generalist practice. In K. Libal, S. Berthold, R. Thomas, & L. Healy (Eds.), *Advancing human rights in social work education* (pp. 19–38). Alexandria, VA: CSWE Press.
- Wronka, J. (2016). Sharing my story: Representing social work at the UN and select local human rights activism. *Human Rights and Social Work*, 1(1), 50–60.
- Zurdo Alaguero, A., & Serrano Pascual, A. (2013). Los «nuevos pobres»: Representaciones colectivas sobre la crisis y la pobreza en las nuevas capas sociales vulnerabilizadas. En *REPS, Las políticas sociales entre crisis y post-crisis*. IV Congreso Red de Estudios sobre Políticas Sociales. 6–7 de junio.

# Maximization vs. Inclusion as a Value Conflict in Development Work

Johnny Ramírez-Johnson

*Fuller Theological Seminary*

Héctor Luis Díaz

*Western Michigan University*

Vijayan Kumara Pillai

*The University of Texas at Arlington*

*This article builds on previous research studies strongly suggesting that high levels of social capital are positively associated with the economic and political progress of community residents. As previously proposed by the authors of this article, such findings may encourage policy makers of government and non-governmental development organizations to concentrate their efforts and resources in communities whose residents have been identified as having high levels of social capital. Policy-makers may view pre-existing high levels of social capital among community residents as a factor likely to increase the level of success of their respective socio-economic development initiatives. Such course of action however, would pose a serious ethical issue, given that it could lead to the exclusion of the poor communities with lower levels of social capital and the greatest socio-economic needs. This article explores ethical questions that emerge as we contrast an inductively created development model focusing on emotions with the positivistic social capital model often used in development work. Furthermore, it proposes that the ethical principles associated with the feelings and values held by development organizations and service recipients ought to guide decision making in development work. Such an approach would foster the relationships between policy makers, development professionals*

*and program participants and would enhance the possibility of meeting their expectations.*

*Key words: Development Ethics, Feelings and Values, Maximizing Development, Relationships*

A qualitative and quantitative multinational research study was conducted in the countries of Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Honduras exploring the constructs of social capital, economic progress, and democratic behaviors at the local community level. Quantitative findings strongly suggest that high levels of social capital are positively associated with the economic and political progress of community residents (Diaz et al., 2008). Qualitative analyses, on the other hand, enabled researchers to propose a conceptual model of democracy as development, which is described later in this article. The findings of the previously mentioned study may encourage policy makers working for government and non-governmental development organizations to concentrate their efforts and resources in communities whose residents have been identified as having high levels of social capital. They may view high social capital as a factor increasing the likelihood of success of socio-economic development initiatives.

This course of action however, would pose a serious ethical issue, given that it could lead to the exclusion of the poorest communities, which are more likely to have the greatest needs and lower levels of social capital. The current article suggests an alternate approach for determining how to use governmental and NGO development funds and other resources based on the experience of eight communities surveyed in four Latin American countries.

### *Social Capital and Democracy*

This article aims to explore the ethics associated with promoting social capital, economic progress and democracy from the perspective of community residents who received socio-economic development services in targeted communities of the four studied countries (Diaz et al., 2008). A quantitative study conducted by Carbajal, Parsons, Pillai, Sahelin, and

Sharma (2012) suggests that social capital is positively associated with democratic attitudes. The current study, however, relies on qualitative or phenomenological information. Researchers used open-ended questions that asked participants to define democracy and to identify people or entities that contributed to the promotion of democracy in their respective communities. One thousand two hundred heads of households responded to a semi-structured questionnaire, and approximately 80 of them participated in 12 focus group discussions in which they expressed their views of community development and democracy. The model of democracy as development described below was the result of in-depth interviews, focus groups and open-ended questions. A combined analysis facilitated the emergence of the five areas of the model shown below (see Diaz et al., 2008).

Figure 1. MODEL of Democracy as Development: As Defined by Community Members

1. Community water access: local or national government related →	secures survival
2. Peace and security versus fear and mistrust: national government related →	produces trust
3. Infrastructure of community by governmental and/or NGOs →	quality of life
4. Community’s social capital: government facilitated (organization or intervention) →	produces unity of purpose
5. Knowledge imparted and received (role of NGOs) →	results in community consolidation

END RESULT: A united community with a purpose and a method for achieving its goals of progress = Democracy as development



The development process of the previously described model focuses on the feelings expressed on the topic of democracy and how these feelings addressed or were connected with everyday life events that were presented as central to life. To identify such feelings, narratives were analyzed to tell the story of the interviewees as presented in the interviews. Such analysis enabled the interviewees and the interviewer to connect via identified feelings as the *emit* and *etic* approach described by Barrett (2009).

Emic and etic analysis are terms taken from linguistics, and refer respectively to the actor's insider (subjective) perspective and the observer's outsider (objective) perspective. Historical particularists give priority to emic analysis and to subjective data such as values, norms, and emotions. (Barrett, 2009, p. 54)

The idea that emotions and feelings are key to the interpretation of the perspective of the interviewees as understood by the interviewer took central stage in the development of this model. That is why water access and democratic values were associated in the life and experience of these communities. Water access was given the central and primary role in defining democracy. Thus, the abstract concept of democracy becomes the tangible access to water via everyday feelings and emotions.

This article explores ethical questions that emerge as we contrast the previously described development model that focuses on emotions with the positivistic social capital model often used in development work that focuses on abstract ideas to define development.

### *Social Capital*

The social capital construct has been used for almost four decades in sociology, economics, and social work (Durlauf & Fafchamps, 2004). Efforts have been made to quantify concepts associated with social capital such as: good will, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among individuals and families (Hanifan, 1916); the sum of the actual or potential resources associated to possession of a durable network (Bourdieu, 1985); networks and resources connected to them that network members can access or mobilize (Lin, 2001); and as

networks, norms, and trust that facilitate social action for the common good (Putnam, 1993). Some studies have focused on social capital as attitudes and cognitive dynamics, while others have focused on behavioral manifestations (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Consistent with this second group, Pringle and Welsh (2001) have conceptualized social capital as consisting of networks of mutual trust and norms of reciprocity.

Given the long and varied list of commonly used definitions of social capital, Durlauf and Fafchamps (2004) conducted a review of the existing literature related to this construct. As a result, they were able to identify the following three ideas underlying all definitions: (1) Social capital generates positive externalities for members of a group; (2) these externalities are achieved through shared trust, norms, and values and their consequent effects on expectations and behavior; (3) shared trust, norms, and values arise from informal forms of organizations based on social networks and associations. The study of social capital is that of network-based processes that generate beneficial outcomes through norms and trust (Durlauf & Fafchamps, 2004, p. 5).

Baum and Ziersch (2003) have classified social capital as *bonding, bridging and linking*. In their view, bonding social capital is horizontal in nature and brings together individuals or groups with similar characteristics. This type of social capital will tend to exclude persons who do not share certain characteristics and may lead to lack of cooperation and trust. On the other hand, bridging and linking social capital tends to cut across communities and individuals with varying levels of power. People with this type of social capital will feel responsible for the well-being of others outside of their group. Because of this, it is likely to help reduce inequities. Furthermore, according to Pringle and Welsh (2001) there are three types of social capital: physical, human, and social.

Easterly (2006) and Pawar (2006) criticize the concept of social capital as stemming from assumptions and theories associated with capital and capitalism. According to them, the concepts and propositions of social capital theory are questionable. Reportedly, the concept of capital has antisocial and exploitative connotations. It may also be used for misleading and manipulative purposes by the political right. For these reasons, they recommend replacing the concept of social capital with other less

politically charged concepts such as: trust, networks, collective action, norms, relationships, social capacity, community capacity, social networks, or communities. In spite of such criticisms, the construct of social capital continues to be widely used.

Other studies are concerned with the emergence, development and maintenance of social capital. Pillai, Díaz, Basham, and Ramirez-Johnson (2011), for instance, conducted a study suggesting that democratic attitudes had a significant positive effect on social capital even in rural settings, and that social capital increased as democratic attitudes improved. De Zuñiga (2012), in his study, found that seeking information through electronic social networks “is a positive and significant predictor of people’s social capital and civic and political participatory behaviors” (p. 319).

Glaeser, Laibson, and Sacerdote (2002), in turn, found that social capital first arises and then falls with age, that it declines with expected mobility, that it rises in occupations with greater returns to social skills, that it is higher among home owners, and that it falls sharply with physical distance. They also found that people who invest in human capital also invest in social capital.

### *Benefits of Social Capital*

According to Baum and Ziersch (2003), epidemiological studies and in-depth qualitative studies have linked elements of social capital to positive health status. Felicio, Couto, and Caiado (2014) propose that the social capital associated with players external to an organization is positively associated with raising resources and building trust in such organizations. Furthermore, they point to the fact that human capital and social capital are consistently correlated with improved organizational performance.

Pringle and Welsh (2001) propose that social capital holds organizations together. Bowles and Gintis (2002) propose that social capital contributes to enhanced community governance. In their view, social capital implies the willingness of community members to abide by the rules and norms of the respective community, and coerces into obedience those who refuse to comply with such norms. Furthermore, social capital should increase the community’s capacity to solve problems.

Jin (2013) examines the effects of various social capital relational components on the promotion of pro-environmental behavior in five key public policy areas: recycling, food purchasing behavior, gasoline, energy conservation, and water use. "Findings suggest that the components of social capital work differently and that each component's influence also varies depending on the context of the environmental issue" (p. 40).

According to Yoon and Wang (2011), organizational citizenship behaviors and social capital influence knowledge sharing in virtual communities. Organizational citizenship behaviors include altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue. A significant finding was that "social interaction ties and identification of social capital have a strong impact on member's knowledge-sharing intentions and knowledge quality in virtual communities" (p. 106).

Tsasis, Cooke-Lauder, and Evans (2015) make reference to the influence of interpersonal and interprofessional ties (social capital) on the nature and tone of inter-organizational relations. Reportedly, "social capital provides both tangible and intangible benefits to collaborative work" (p. 546). Furthermore, Couto and Guthrie (1999) propose that social capital may serve as a mediating structure that may enhance the functioning of democracy and may help enhance social and economic equality.

An ethical issue suggested by the emergence of the five areas model proposed in this article is who gets to define development, democracy or other measures of well-being. Easterly (2006) suggests that people are poor, not simply because western NGOs and governments are not doing enough to uplift them, but because of the inability of development initiatives to empower these.

The qualitative approach used in this article comes partly in response to criticism of Western theories and mostly positivistic research approaches. Easterly (2006), for instance, challenges the appropriateness of using Western development theories and intervention models given that such theories and models may be culturally biased and inconsistent with the socio-cultural, political and economic reality of non-Western cultures and countries. In his view, the position of Sachs (2005) is presumptuous and culturally arrogant. Reportedly, Sachs presumes a full understanding of development phenomena. He attempts

to outline and develop in detail “key practical solutions to almost all of their [extreme poor countries] problems” (p. 52). The inductive qualitative approach goes a long way in responding to these concerns, given that it stems from the experiences of people, their perceptions, and their reports.

“Developed” or industrialized nations could have a great impact on the eradication of extreme poverty around the world by providing the necessary resources for development efforts. The end of poverty will undoubtedly require a global network of cooperation among people who do not know each other and who do not necessarily trust each other. Meaningful collaboration between developed and developing countries and among development workers and targeted populations is essential (Sachs, 2005). The 2015 United Nations Millennium Development Goals or Agenda is expected to produce great transformations (Sachs, 2005; United Nations, 2015) and lead to sustainability of life. Sachs (2005) and other supporters of the millennial agenda believe that the proposed strategies covering basic health, education, governmental power, infrastructure, transportation and communications services will eradicate poverty.

Easterly (2006), however, challenges Sachs’ (2005) premises and labels his worldview as mistaken. Easterly asks what are the appropriate ways of serving the so-called poor nations, particularly the notion of *providing aid to the poor* (Easterly, 2006). He suggests looking at the issue of underdevelopment from the poor nations’ viewpoints. He proposes adopting a “searcher’s” worldview, which is very consistent with the qualitative or phenomenological approach. Easterly further proposes changing the aid philosophy and moving from the role of “planners” to the role of “searchers.” “Planners work from the top down, mostly talking to other planners. They see global solutions and mobilize for them” (Easterly, 2006, p. 5). On the other hand, “searchers” begin by asking what is the view of the so-called under-developed country before determining what the under-developed country needs (Easterly, 2006, p. 5).

Planners transform multifaceted, global development challenges, seeking to simplify them following predetermined Western developed theories of development, as the ones informing social capital theories. Searchers, on the other hand, seek an understanding of development from the bottom up. Searchers collaborate with native actors with the goal of enabling local efforts

to promote their own version of development. Subsequently, they try out tentatively identified solutions, while identifying and documenting what seems to work in a given local context. An example of localized initiatives for indigenous and self-directed development are the “gang of four Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan” who achieved significant economic development without Western directives (Easterly, 2006, p. 27). Easterly suggests that the best prospect for poor nations is to be their own searchers and to “borrow ideas and technology” (2006, p. 28) from the West when it suits them.

Easterly’s cow metaphor seeks to illustrate the disparity between the ideas of prescribed development path suggested by Sachs versus his self-directed searcher approach. Cows do not, cannot, and will not win a horse race like the Kentucky Derby. Easterly suggests that development agencies are more like cows than horses, thus they need to ask—“what kinds of useful things can your cow do?” and create goals that suit such approaches (Easterly, 2006, p. 11).

### *The Ethics of Emotions and Feelings*

Myers (2011), following a careful analysis of Easterly (2006) and Sachs (2005), as well as others not covered here, asserts that

Contrasting “planners” with “searchers,” Easterly believes social problems are better solved as close to the action as possible by innovators who try and fail and try again (searchers). Planners, on the other hand, live in Washington DC, London, and Peking and assume they know enough to be able to figure out global solutions and then determine what needs to be supplied. Searchers know they will never know enough and instead look for what is being demanded and try to meet that need. Planners provide solutions that are developed a long way from the front line; searchers look for what is working locally and try to make it better. (Myers, 2011, p. 36)

Myers (2011) clarifies that Christian development agencies rely on development strategies that often feel “secular.”

Christians who separate the physical and spiritual realms tend to be God-centered in their spiritual lives and human-centered when they think and act in the physical world.



For our spiritual work, we turn to the church and our Bibles; for development work, we turn to the social sciences. This goes a long way in explaining why development practices of Christian development agencies often feel "secular." (p. 11)

Consistent with Myers' statement, we propose that the ethical conflict in development work comes at the attitudinal, feelings and values levels.

The relationships of the poor do not work for the well-being of the poor because of spiritual values held by others and by the poor that do not enhance and support life. Selfishness, love of power, and feelings of ordained privilege express themselves in god complexes. Loss of hope, opportunity, and recognition mar the identity of the poor. Racism, ethnocentrism, and ostracism erode the intended blessing of having many cultures. Fear of spirits and belief in gods that cannot save obscure the offer of the God who desires to save. At the end of the day, the causes of poverty are spiritual. (Myers, 2011, p. 15)

The Western "notion of ordained privilege" that Easterly calls "white man's burden," frames the development efforts of the West. Thus what looks similar to a theoretical paradigm is, after all, a gut feeling and assumption of superiority and assumed universal logic.

Myers goes further in his analysis; feelings are also framing the responses of the receivers. "Loss of hope," "fear of spirits," and "belief in gods" are all defined as sentiments, feelings that define people's motives and actions. Values, after all, are associated with feelings. Myers calls these feelings spiritual in nature. Here, we define spiritual as the feelings and values held by developers and by those seeking development. After all, Myers (2011) is not oblivious to the idea that spirituality is connected to values and feelings, a psychological construct, in his words:

Less expected by the researchers, many of the manifestations of well-being were psychological in nature (Narayan-Parker et al. 2000, 26-27). A desire to feel better about oneself and a wish for a sense of dignity and respect were heard. Peace of mind, lack of anxiety, being God-fearing, and being happy or satisfied with life were named as elements of human well-being. Somewhat to the surprise of the Western researchers, a spiritual life and religious observance are woven into other aspects of well-being. (Myers, 2011, p. 32)

The “desire to feel better about oneself and a wish for a sense of dignity and respect” are central to the agenda of the recipients of development services: “Poor people feel nonexistent, valueless, and humiliated” (Wink, 1992, p. 101). As much as the development agencies and the theoretical frame workers of social capital and other development-like theories think their theories follow universal logics, their theories are bound by their values and their values follow their feelings. This was the implied trust of Walter Wink’s ideas when he asked, “how can we oppose evil without creating new evils and being made evil ourselves?” (Wink, 1992, p. 3).

As concluded by Narayan-Parker and colleagues (2000), the most important elements for development are not measured in dollars, but instead are measured in self-respect and dignity; when described by poor people themselves, this “means being able to live without being a burden to others” (Narayan-Parker, Chambers, Shaw, & Petesch, 2000, p. 27) and “living without extending one’s hand; living without being subservient to anybody; and being able to bury dead family members decently” (Narayan-Parker et al. 2000, p. 27). Of course, we all can see the financial implications of these requests for dignity, but money is not the real currency at stake. The currency is psychological—well-being, human dignity, and relationships in community—all crucial feelings people around the world need.

From Myers we conclude that the centrality of feelings comes about because of relationships: “Ultimately, the effectiveness of transformational development comes down, not to theory, principles, or tools, but to people. Transformation is about transforming relationships, and relationships are transformed by people” (Myers, 2011, p. 219)—people who belong, believe and behave according to their values and are guided by their feelings.

### *Ethics of Feelings as Spiritual Force for Development Rationale*

To fight the top down approach to development work, Myers (2011) and those who follow him have called upon spiritual values that are religious in nature.

Said another way, the process by which we work with the community is not just a problem-solving or appreciative exercise. It must be a spiritual exercise, an exercise in discernment.

We need to integrate the methods of the spiritual disciplines into our development activities and use them as part of the development process. We must learn to be as spiritually discerning as we are professionally discerning. (p. 248)

This article proposes that the operational underlying logic of such conclusions is always associated to values and feelings. Just like capitalism was shown long time ago as being based on Christian values. In relation to capitalism, Weber stated:

At the same time it expresses a type of feeling which is closely connected with certain religious ideas. If we thus ask, why should "money be made out of men", Benjamin Franklin himself, although he was a colorless deist, answers in his autobiography with a quotation from the Bible, which his strict Calvinistic father drummed into him again and again in his youth: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings" (Proverbs 22:29). The earning of money within the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling; and this virtue and proficiency are, as it is now not difficult to see, the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic, as expressed in the passages we have quoted, as well as in all his works without exception. (Weber, 2001, p. 53)

Max Weber's ideas about capitalism were founded on the feelings he interpreted from the words of the parents of American capitalism, who in turn had Christian ideas or motivations stemming from biblical texts and even deists like Benjamin Franklin. We propose that Myers' spiritual values are rooted in feelings. This proposition does not attempt to legitimize or delegitimize the Christian spiritual values of Myers or to judge the religious values of the development agencies and or the development recipients. Based on these ideas, this article proposes that a simple match of values and feelings between funders and recipients will facilitate working relationships that can in turn be translated into a bottom up approach, or searcher mentality, or what Myers called "walking with the poor: principles and practices of transformational development" (2011, p. i).

*How Would It Look Like?*

An ethical model has been developed based on data and information obtained from study participants in the four Latin American countries. The multidimensional model described earlier proposes that if development agencies share, for instance, the value of water as primary, then such agencies can begin the value matching process with participant communities (Diaz et al., 2008). Obviously nothing is simple or one sided; we propose, however, that everything is value-laden and feelings-focused, even if the feelings are hidden in theoretical layers of social sciences jargon.

In our view, development agencies need to begin their work by advertising their values, truest feelings and guiding principles. All proposed development work ought to stem from the values and deep feelings of the indigenous populations. Christian development organizations are encouraged to share their values and feelings, even as they try to reach out to non-Christian populations. Development organizations, as well as members of targeted populations, are encouraged to rely on feelings and values as guiding principles, and not necessarily on beliefs and doctrines. We contend that a good match of intrinsic values and feelings can foster an effective working relationship and sustainable development more effectively than particular sociological theories.

Nations and organizations promoting socio-economic development must start their work by clearly communicating what they are seeking to gain or accomplish. They should substitute the *White Man's Burden* described by Easterly with the values and feelings that power such burden and communicate it in an upfront manner. They should seek to identify the values and feelings of service recipients and highlight those that represent common ground. The logic of feelings and values, not one of social science's preconceived notions, ought to overtly guide development work. Seeking to attain as close a value and feelings match as possible is a basis for development work. This will be likely to facilitate working relationships of equality and exponentially increase the possibility of success in development work.

## References

- Aldrich, D. P., & Meyer, M. A. (2015). Social capital and community resilience. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(2), 254–269.
- Barrett, S. (2009). *Anthropology: A student's guide to theory and method*. University of Toronto Press. Kindle Edition.
- Baum, F. E., & Ziersch, A. M. (2003). Social capital. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 57(5), 320–323. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25570000>
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2002). Social capital and community governance. *The Economic Journal*, 112(483), 419–436. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/798455](http://www.jstor.org/stable/798455)
- Carbajal, J., Parsons, J., Pillai, V., Sahelin, M., & Sharma, B. (2012). The effects of participation and resources on democratic attitudes: Role of social capital in four Latin and South American countries. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 38(3), 330–341.
- Couto, R., & Guthrie, C. S. (1999). *Making democracy work better: Mediating structures, social capital, and the democratic prospect*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- De Zuñiga, H. G. (2012). Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17, 319–336.
- Díaz, H. L., Ramírez-Johnson, J., Basham, R., & Pillai, V. K. (2008). *Strengthening democracy through community capacity building: A study of four Latin American countries*. Spokane, WA: Marquette Books.
- Durlauf, S. N., & Fafchamps, M. (2004). Social capital. *NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 10485*. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w10485>
- Easterly, W. (2006). *White man's burden*. New York: Penguin.
- Enderle, G. (2010). Wealth creation in China and some lessons for development ethics: Corporate responsibility and sustainability. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 96, 1–15.
- Felicio, J. A., Couto, E., & Caiado, J. (2014). Human capital, social capital and organizational performance. *Management Decision*, 52(2), 350–364.
- Glaeser, E. L., Laibson, D., & Sacerdote, B. (2002). An economic approach to social capital. *The Economic Journal*, 112(483), 437–458. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/798456](http://www.jstor.org/stable/798456)

- Hanifan, L. J. (1916). The rural school community center. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 67, 130-138.
- Jin, M. (2013). Does social capital promote pro-environmental behaviors? Implications for collaborative governance. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 36(6), 397-407. DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2013.773038.
- Lin, N. (2001). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Myers, B. L. (2011). *Walking with the poor: Principles and practices of transformational development* (rev. and expanded ed.). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Narayan-Parker, D., Chambers, R., Shaw, M., & Petesch, P. (2000). *Voices of the poor: Crying out for change*. New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- Pawar, M. (2006). "Social" "capital"? *The Social Science Journal*, 43, 211-226.
- Pillai, V. K., Díaz, H. L., Basham, R. E., & Ramirez-Johnson, J. (2011). Democratic attitudes and social capital in Latin America. *International Social Work*, 54(6), 767-779.
- Pringle, M., & Welsh, T. (2001). Social capital. *British Medical Journal*, 323(7306), 177. Retrieved from <http://www.bmj.com/archive/>
- Putnam, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sachs, J. D. (2005). *The end of poverty: The economic possibilities of our time*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Tsasis, P., Cooke-Lauder, J., & Evans, J. M. (2015). Working together in a complex environment: Collaborative behaviors and social capital. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38(8), 544-552, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2014.949749.
- United Nations. (2015). *We can end poverty: Millennium development goals beyond 2015*. New York: United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
- Weber, M. (2001). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons, Trans.). London: Routledge Classics.
- Wink, W. (1992). *Engaging the powers: Discernment and resistance in a world of domination*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Yoon, C., & Wang, Z. (2011). The role of citizenship behaviors and social capital in virtual communities. *Journal of Computer Information*, 52(1), 106-115.





# Use of Technology, Pedagogical Approaches and Intercultural Competence in Development

Dee Ann Sherwood

Marian Tripplett

Sarah Hoyle-Katz

Joy Langereis

*Western Michigan University*

*Social work education has placed central importance on the development of intercultural competency and more recently, cultural humility. Strategies for effectively leveraging technology, logistics, place and pedagogy are essential within increasingly diverse education and practice settings. This study explores how two Western Michigan University (WMU) social work faculty members teaching at off-campus sites developed an on-line learning course in Chicago in collaboration with sociologists from the Chicago Center for Culture and Urban Life. Following four weeks of online and Skype-based learning, master's level social work students interacted directly with diverse communities over an intensive four-day travel experience. Utilizing Freirean pedagogy, they engaged with communities through participation in dialogue and critical reflection of current social and economic conditions in the City of Chicago. Students also visited Hull House, a site of the Settlement House Movement that preceded the rise of the profession of social work. Following completion of the course, students reported its impact on their learning experiences which included: increased awareness of their own beliefs, biases, and values; increased knowledge of stigmatized communities; and critical reflection on their own experiences of power, privilege, and oppression. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of student reflection papers showed development of cultural humility and intercultural competencies. This model may be useful for faculty*

*and students in traditional university settings and distance education programs, as well as for practitioners in need of continuing education and professional development.*

*Key Words: cultural competence, development, distance education, diversity, online teaching, technology*

## Introduction

What should be the strategy and mission of the social work profession? This article contends that the cross-cultural education of social work practitioners is central to the strategy and mission of the profession. As educators and practitioners, we continue to work within and against systems that confer power, teaching students how to analyze and confront structural oppression that produces dehumanizing effects on people. Education is a key feature of social and economic development. Emancipatory approaches to education (Freire, 1970/2007; Mezirow, 1997) encourage learners to take note and reflect on what is happening around them in order to understand the larger systems of privilege and oppression that impact their lives and the lives of others. At the micro-practice level, education for human development is core to our mission, vision and values as social work professionals (Gielser, 2013; Hernández & Dunbar, 2007). At the mezzo and macro-practice levels, education lays a foundation for social and economic development, as well as the advancement of human rights and civil liberties.

The *International Council of Social Work (ICSW) Global Agenda* suggests the following professional goals: to promote social and economic equality, to promote the dignity and worth of all people, to work toward environmental sustainability, and to increase recognition of the importance of human relationships (ICSW, 2012). Likewise, effective strategies to “harness technology for social good” align with the *Grand Challenges in Social Work* (Sherraden et al., 2015). We propose that leveraging technology, logistics, place, and pedagogy in an intercultural social work course is an approach strategically aligned with the profession’s current aspirations and global agenda. We present a mixed methods study of a social work distance education

course that combines online and experiential learning in order to develop students' intercultural knowledge, skills, and values.

*Current Challenges in Teaching Diversity  
and Intercultural Competence*

Cultural competence places emphasis on the knowledge, values and skills needed for practitioner proficiency in diverse professional-client relationships (NASW, 2007), whereas cultural humility focuses on addressing systemic causes of oppression and injustice and a commitment to lifelong learning (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013; Ortega & Coulborn Faller, 2011; Schuldborg et al., 2012). Building self-awareness of one's own privileged and oppressed identities begins a lifelong process of confronting one's beliefs and biases about persons different from oneself. This on-going transformative process is necessary, but not without difficulties. As faculty, we are challenged in helping students and future practitioners to understand the complex intersectionality of gender, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other cultural dynamics (Lee & Priester, 2014). Approaches to teaching the requisite knowledge, skills, and values for competent social workers may range from traditional classroom methods to consciousness raising, field experiences, study abroad, service learning, and online learning.

Deepak, Rountree, and Scott (2015) found that "class discussions related to diversity, power, and white privilege engender strong emotions and strained interactions among students and faculty, who need the skills and self-awareness to navigate these challenging moments" (p. 110). Social work faculty must be willing and able to work through these conflicts and normalize the discomfort that accompanies sharing differing opinions and experiences in a classroom setting. However, sometimes they are not willing or able to "go there." As one participant observed, "the inability to 'go there' can lead some instructors to act as referees [among students], preventing the classes from discussing difficult topics" (p. 116). Emotional and intellectual engagement is needed in learning environments and is supported by developing rules of engagement for dialogue, modeling, encouraging difficult conversations and emphasizing critical thinking and

self-reflection on how social justice relates to them personally and professionally.

Faculty concerns about course evaluations may be an additional factor in the effective teaching of this topic. In the same study, one instructor reflected that all but one faculty member that teaches the course at this university were at the adjunct level. This was attributed to the fact that tenure-track faculty avoid teaching the diversity course because student evaluations tend to be lower due to the nature of the content (Deepak et al., 2015). White/European American faculty members may struggle with concerns about legitimacy because they are sometimes perceived as lacking the life experience and insider knowledge about the lives of people of color (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 2008). Moreover, they may be operating with the false assumption that race is only relevant to people of color (Miller, Hyde, & Ruth, 2004).

By contrast, faculty of color may face students' defensiveness, disinterest, or denial of racial oppression (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 2008); student challenges to their objectivity and competence (Miller, Donner & Fraser, 2004; Wong, 2004); and feeling overburdened with the responsibility for diversity content and concerns (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 2008). Discomfort is a sign that we need to continue the conversation and consider appropriate action. If education is about learning to see the world in new ways, then it is bound at times to leave us confused, angry or challenged. It is essential that White/European American social workers view themselves as being *inside* race relations, rather than apart from them (Todd, 2011). Concerns about *whiteness* and its implications may be "an opportunity for working with students to construct professional identities through ambivalence, understanding that practice is always haunted by unresolvable histories and unintended effects" (p. 131). Deepak, Rountree and Scott (2015) contend that being "*inside* relations of racism is to recognize that White privilege is a benefit of racism, even when unwanted and unintended. White social workers cannot save communities of color but can work alongside as allies as they embrace the ambivalence of being implicated in relations of racism" (p. 110).

### *Service Learning*

Service learning for some may be a powerful learning experience, but for many it is viewed as a privilege. The goal of service learning is to synthesize learned theory and knowledge with experience, while also promoting critical theory and reflexive process (Butin, 2006). Sherraden, Lough, and McBride (2008) observed that international volunteers from Europe and the United States tend to be young, affluent and White. The concept of service learning is predicated on the student who is childless, single, has full-time student status and is financially stable. Moreover, demographics in post-secondary education continue to change, with students increasing in age as well as pursuing education on a part-time basis (Butin, 2006). Koch, Ross, Wendell & Aleksandrova-Howell (2014) evaluated a service learning course where students traveled to Belize for ten days and worked in conjunction with a planned project at an elementary school. Service learning students reported the following impacts: changes in diversity attitudes, professional development, knowledge immersion, personal development, group and interpersonal relations, cultural identity, and emotional impact of relationships.

### *Immersion Learning*

Immersion experiences may or may not include a service component. Marshall and Wieling (2000) describe immersion experiences as “cultural plunges” where students develop cultural understanding and empathy through brief encounters with members of a host culture in a local setting. Simply put, a cultural plunge is individual exposure to persons or groups markedly different in culture (ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and/or physical exceptionality) from that of the individual taking the plunge. Immersion learning may be used to challenge students’ biases and stereotypes and encourage self-reflection and exploration. Drabble, Sen, and Oppenheimer (2012) describe a classroom-based transcultural immersion, with an approach that de-emphasizes the role of the instructor as experts about culture, and honors instead the positionality and self-reflexivity of students who implicitly struggle with privileged and oppressed identities.

### *The Need for Integrative Use of Technology*

Adding to the pedagogical complexity of teaching diversity, social work educators continue to seek creative ways to integrate learning with advances in technology in the educational experience (Anderson-Meger, 2011; Coe Regan & Freddolino, 2008). Students interact with their peers (and arguably future clients) in online environments. E-learning forums, particularly when used in a hybrid or blended-learning environment, may be a useful tool for social work professional socialization (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Phelan, 2015). Moreover, social workers must demonstrate sensitivity to cultural diversity in face-to-face and online interactive formats. Social workers have an ethical obligation to appropriately integrate technological tools in order to best serve clients (López Peláez & Díaz, 2016; Malamud, 2011). Likewise, educators are responsible for preparing students to be able to perform this task (Coe Regan & Freddolino, 2008; Robbins & Singer, 2014).

### *Course Development and Context*

The *Intercultural Social Work* course in Chicago merged concepts from the online learning, cultural plunges, and consciousness raising methods described above. Informally, we described the course as a “study-abroad-within” a U.S. urban center. The course was developed over a two-year period in collaboration with the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture (CCULC). Faculty from the university worked with CCULC to develop course content that aligned with planned experiences in Chicago and included sociological and social work perspectives. The course was launched in 2013. As distance education partners situated about 70 miles apart in Benton Harbor and Grand Rapids Michigan, course instructors identified an opportunity to facilitate dialogue across off-campus sites using Skype-based technology so that students at the two locations could begin to dialogue about their life, work, learning experiences, as well as discuss the course readings and planned activities. Benton Harbor is a racially diverse community, with African American students representing a majority of the students in the MSW Program. The Grand Rapids area is less diverse, socially conservative, with White/European Americans representing a



majority of MSW students at this location. Prior to the course, the Benton Harbor and Grand Rapids sites had very limited if any direct social interaction.

The *Intercultural Social Work* Chicago course was organized into three online modules of sequenced readings, videos, writing assignments and discussion forums. At the conclusion of each module, students posted an online response to questions such as *what new insights did you gain from the readings? How does this shape your understanding of culture, race, ethnicity, institutional inequality and oppression? How does the past shape and influence present and future relationships among diverse people/cultures?* Students also composed a *Letter to Self* at the beginning of the four-day weekend. Each letter was returned at the end of the course so the students could compare and contrast against their initial and current beliefs and opinions in composing a final self-reflection paper.

### *Immersion Experiences*

Students visited Chicago for four days, interacting directly with several communities with whom they previously had limited access or understanding: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) seniors at the LGBT Center on Halsted, homeless veterans at the Featherfist agency, young muralists in the Pilsen Mexican-American community, urban gardeners in the Puerto Rican community, Indian small business owners of Devon Street, and leaders of the African-American southside communities. Students also visited the Jane Addams Hull House, the site where settlement house movement originated as a precursor of the profession of social work. Staff from the Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture (CCULC) served as guides as students traversed cultural and geographical city boundaries on foot, by bus, and by public transportation. CCULC teaches the use of “first voice pedagogy,” engaging students in dialogue with individuals situated in communities in order to view the world from their perspective (Chesebro, Nelson, Schmidt, & Holloway, 2010). A lead sociologist from the CCULC and course instructors co-facilitated group debriefing discussions with students following interactions with communities. Students were thus able to see how the social contexts, including language,

economics, culture, and geography, interacted to shape the lives of the people with whom they met.

## Methods

Our research relies on a critical, intercultural approach, which includes an analysis of the interplay between culture, social location, and societal systems of power and privilege (Ortega & Coulborn Faller, 2011). The authors explored the impact of the hybrid-experiential intercultural course in Chicago on graduate students' development of intercultural competencies. To meet this goal we utilized a mixed method approach. The authors obtained Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) approval and written permission from each student for anonymous use of self-reflection papers. The request for permission was sent after course grades were posted to reduce the potential for demand characteristics and possible undue influence on students' consent to participate. Qualitative information was obtained from students' self-reflection papers, which students composed within one week of the course travel experience. An open coded analysis of themes was generated using the approach described by Denzin & Lincoln (2005).

Quantitative data were collected from retrospective self-assessments that students completed one week after the course travel experience. Data were analyzed using simple exploratory methods comparing mean scores on a 5-point Likert-scaled survey. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 50 years of age. Of the 41 students from two courses, 38 were female (93%) and 4 were male (7%). A total of 14 identified as African American, two as Hispanic/Latino, one as Asian American, and 24 as Caucasian. A total of two students identified as having a disability and one as a member of the LGBT community.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Students' written self-reflection papers were submitted via electronic drop boxes on the course learning management system. Following the posting of course grades, written permission was obtained for anonymous use of self-reflection papers. Students were asked to write a six- to seven-page paper that described their assumptions about culture, economics or worldview

and how they were challenged as a result of the course. Students were also asked to reflect upon how what they learned is likely to impact their social work practice in the future.

Following the course travel experience, students additionally completed retrospective self-assessments of their understanding of the communities with whom they interacted, before and after the course. Students ranked their level of understanding on a five point Likert-scale, with 1=Poor, 2=Fair, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, and 5=Excellent with regard to their knowledge of seven communities: Muslim, homeless veterans, Mexican-American, Indian, LGBT seniors, persons with disabilities, and Jane Addams Hull House. Simple mean scores for each question were calculated. Mean score before and after the course were compared. If they improved, students were asked to share what they attributed the improvement to, e.g. course readings, assignments, discussion forums, debriefing experiences, presentations from instructors, and/or interactions with community members.

## Results

Student self-assessment data were collected in a pre-test and post-test format, prior to and after the completion of all course readings, discussion forums, and travel activities. The initial results showed that students may have been overestimating their pre-course knowledge of marginalized communities. For example, students may have overrated their levels of understanding of a particular community. After the completing the course, one student commented “I didn’t know, what I didn’t know.” The student had self-evaluated as a 3.0 or “good” prior to taking the course and 2.5 after the course.

Although this student’s knowledge had improved, the growth was not reflected in the traditional pre-post model of assessment. Students’ post-course self-assessment scores trending downward was more a reflection of a realization of the limits of their pre-course knowledge. For the purpose of this study and ongoing assessment, we revised the administration of student self-assessments to a retrospective process (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000). Students evaluated their pre-course knowledge retrospectively at the end of the course, “knowing what you now know.” A summary of retrospective self-assessment data is displayed in the table below.

Table 1: Retrospective Student Self-Assessment Data

Community	Before	After	Difference
Muslim	1.68	3.58	1.90
Homeless Veteran	2.21	3.53	1.32
Mexican American	1.37	3.84	2.47
East Indian	1.37	3.89	2.52
LGBT Seniors	2.58	3.95	1.37
Persons with Disabilities	2.63	3.95	1.32

These data suggest improvement in students’ perceived cultural knowledge of the communities they learned about in the course. Their understanding of the history, culture, strengths and resiliency of marginalized populations expanded at the same time they developed a newfound appreciation of the limits of their own knowledge and thus a sense of cultural humility. Statistical analyses were not conducted, however we believe the difference in pre and post-course ratings has practical implications.

*Self-Reflection Paper Excerpts*

Qualitative information gathered from the students’ self-reflection papers was organized around four themes representing major areas of acquisition of knowledge, learning and personal growth. A fifth theme emerged describing the impact of their experiences on their professional identities as social workers and their future social work practice.

*Increased Knowledge of Marginalized Communities*

Students are often very surprised, even shocked, to learn that communities they visit are very different from what they anticipated. They become intensely aware of how little they know about people unlike themselves and may feel ashamed of their ignorance (Nieto, 2006). This promotes a new desire to learn about cultural groups with which they are unfamiliar. For example, students commented about their gained knowledge of diversity and gender roles within Muslim communities:

I also was not aware of the diversity within the Muslim community of Chicago. According to Numrich, (2005) [assigned reading], 'the Muslim community reflects ethnic diversity of global Islam established by Bosnians, Arabs and African Americans.' This diversity was evident in the Mosque that we visited, as men from various ethnic backgrounds were present and participating in the prayer service.

Mr. Ali [Muslim community leader] also provided an interesting explanation of why women are separated from men in the worship area. I had always assumed that the separation was one of subjugation, and had not thought about there being a logistical cause of the traditional separation, or that women may have felt more comfortable in the back, where they were not "on view" for all of the men.

Students visited several neighborhoods in the Southside reflecting the economic diversity of the area. They observed the poverty and lack of grocery stores in one region with middle and upper middle class families a few blocks away, and the expensive home of former civil rights leader Malcolm X. One student was struck by the lack of access to restrooms in an impoverished neighborhood we visited. Another noted the diversity and celebration of culture:

Taking a tour of Southside of Chicago was interesting. One of the first things which surprised me was to learn was that the police station was considered a 'safe place' to use the restroom ... This was explained to us [by locals] that was a 'safe place' due to south side having a high homeless population and shop owners did not allow the public to use the restrooms.

Through our various stops at agencies and communities I felt I heard from many voices of Chicago. I feel I celebrated in the communities and learned of their cultures.

Likewise, a student expressed a sense of ignorance of the plight of veterans following our visit to a homeless shelter for veterans:

Veterans are an extremely neglected population and it causes me great shame to admit this. Remembering the individuals

who put their life on the line for us privileged Americans, to come back home to nothing, is disheartening.

Students were able to connect personal observations with course readings. It was essential that they acknowledged their positive and negative thoughts and feelings about what they learned. Faculty members also emphasized the limits of their knowledge as social and economic systems are constantly changing.

### *Experience Being an Outsider*

In many instances, students felt like outsiders during the trip to Chicago. Their own social identities and previous life experiences contributed to this sense of being an outsider at certain points during the course. Nieto (2006) notes that “many Euro-American students have managed to avoid being in a situation where the predominant ethnicity is different than their own” (p. 80). Feeling like an outsider is helpful in building empathic skills in social work students, if they receive support in this process. Students shared their emotions and discomfort. Helping students transition from personal to professional values requires supportive listening, clarifying questioning, and ongoing acknowledgement of these feelings of being an outsider.

When I walked in, I felt very uncomfortable. I felt like everyone was staring at us, knowing that we did not belong there. Once inside and we were watching the [Muslim] service and prayer, I felt more comfortable being a silent observer.

Nonetheless, stepping out of a car as a young white woman into the place of worship of a population I am not a part of quickly pushed me into a place of awareness. Awareness that I was quickly turned into a minority, that no amount of education can prepare you to be immersed into an uncomfortable situation, and that my current feelings of nervousness were ones felt by many within this population daily.

Students in our course came primarily from West Michigan, Christian backgrounds, and had had little or no exposure to non-Christian faiths. In discussion groups we asked students where their ideas about non-Christians came from, what types

of information such sources might omit, and whose interests are served by these limited or incomplete views.

Students also experienced the feeling of being the object of another's gaze while visiting a community organization for persons with disabilities:

During parts of the weekend, I experienced being a part of the minority group, or the group of 'outsiders.' People in the community sometimes stopped one of us to ask about our group, but other times I noticed people just staring. When we were touring the [Disabled Persons] Access Living building, I even saw one of the employees come over and take a picture of our group from across the room. I felt a bit odd in those situations, but it made me think about how other minority groups feel on a regular basis. Even when they are not treated differently, there are probably often others watching them, just because they look different than the norm.

Another student noted her discomfort in feeling like an outsider in the LGBT community:

This trip caused me to be thankful for my conservative city and state. I felt completely out of place and most uncomfortable in the LGBT communities. I do not consider myself homophobic, but maybe I am according to other's definitions.

Having a new reference point to view and evaluate herself, the student felt temporarily upset or challenged. In her paper, she questioned whether she was "homophobic" by professional standards. This is an important beginning from which one can develop intercultural competencies. Feeling unsafe about expressing their views because they may be judged may lead to a culture of silence in the classroom, which can in turn prevent personal and professional development. Faculty members should acknowledge at what stage the student is and respectfully challenge him/her to move from the personal to the professional to help them to better advocate on behalf of LGBT persons, couples, families, and communities.



*Increased Awareness of Beliefs, Biases, and Values*

Students had the opportunity to ask questions and further examine their own experiences through their exposure to individuals, families, and community leaders in various neighborhoods. Cultural immersion experiences expose students to groups with whom they never may have had the opportunity to interact. Students shared how their experiences increased their awareness of beliefs, biases and personal values. Some students commented about segregation in Chicago and how their personal beliefs had been challenged:

Another personal misconception I had created in my mind was the negative ideas in relation to segregated communities within Chicago. I have viewed these distinct and separate communities as a negative in which groups were forced to live within the confines of an area.

The thing which shocked me the most was how self-segregated Chicago still seems today. I was always under the impression that since Chicago is a northern city, it would not have the same influences or problems with segregation as cities further south.

Similarly, students were challenged to reexamine their beliefs and ideas about Muslims, homeless veterans, and women from India. They were able to find common ground and a shared sense of humanity with people they had initially perceived as very different from themselves:

In the past, I have perceived Muslim males to be chauvinistic, angry and controlling men, with overly subservient wives ... I also did not think that they believed in God.

I have no idea what world I have been living in, but if I would have been asked to describe a homeless vet it would not have looked like either of the men that stood before me. I might have said a white man in a wheelchair, dirty, on a street corner with no legs. I was disappointed in myself for my judgment.

This [experience] immediately shattered the image I had of [East] Indian women being meek, mild, and subservient.

In the diverse communities of Devon Street, students were able to appreciate the ordinary lives of people different from themselves after visiting a hair salon, grocery stores, and human service agencies. Faculty members debriefed students while moving through the city, asking students to share their reactions and observations. Students reflected upon the varying social and economic conditions.

### *Increased Awareness of Power, Privilege, and Oppression*

The course challenged students to consider the many ways in which systems of power, privilege and oppression operate within our society today. Two different types of awareness became evident in the student narratives. Several students felt challenged as a result of seeing privilege, power or oppression in institutions serving the interests of the elite, while other students noticed their own role as oppressors. Both types of awareness encourage students to challenge themselves and the systems and institutions around them:

Through these experiences, I realized just how much oppression was ingrained into our world and industries. Having male and female bathrooms is a way that society is pushing out transgender or gender non-conforming individuals when in reality they could be more included very easily with a simple change.

I was surprised by my personal feelings of fear within this moment and then regretful of having these emotions, because in my mind I am not a racist person and I do not oppress groups. However, I cannot truly say that due to unconscious feelings and through my unearned personal privilege as a white woman I oppress without trying to.

For the first time, some students were coming to terms with personal, internalized conflicts around a privileged and oppressed identities, and the social and economic implications of these identities.

*Impact on Professional Identity and Future Practice*

As social work educators prepare students for professional practice, they must focus on the value of cultural humility. A truly effective course should prepare students to take action when they return home. We worked towards the integration of students' learning experiences in the course and their future practice as social workers:

I learned how to participate in a group that is diverse in age and opinions. But what I am most proud of is that, I believe I have matured enough to listen and respect other cultures.

I learned that I had the obligation to respectfully hold that student [peer] accountable ... I learned that I could have recognized this as an opportunity to advocate for myself as an African American [rather than being silent]. Otherwise, I may not recognize opportunities to advocate on behalf of a client.

I intend to educate and advocate others who are unaware of the stigma and discrimination that LGBT older adults face.

I recognize that cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness are something I must practice daily.

Students were able to identify the potential long-term impact of the course on them personally and professionally. The ability to confront one's personal biases, acknowledge the limits of one's understanding of others, and develop cultural humility are essential to the education of social workers within systems of power, privilege and oppression. We contend that these are also skills that must be consistently modeled by social work educators.

## Discussion

Analyses of self-assessment data and self-reflection papers revealed that students benefitted from the experience of being an outsider. Educational outcomes included increased awareness of their own beliefs, values, and biases; increased knowledge of marginalized communities; and increased awareness of the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression. Their experiences impacted their perceptions of themselves and others,

and will undoubtedly influence their future social work practice. Emancipatory educator Paulo Freire notes, “those who authentically commit themselves to the people must reexamine themselves constantly” (Freire, 1970, p. 60). For social workers to engage with others effectively, they need to continually think critically about personal biases and how they may intentionally or unintentionally contribute to systems of power and oppression.

Affective and experiential educational models may help students increase awareness and cultural understanding. “Too often, racism is taught as an abstract construct with emphasis on knowledge of oppression and discrimination, but with little focus on how to really change that which must first be changed: ourselves” (Loya & Cuevas, 2010, p. 292). It can be challenging for faculty members to teach students to confront the oppressive assumptions that are built into societal discourses. To effectively confront oppressive structures in society, social workers must first engage in ongoing self-examination to confront the oppressor within themselves (Quiñones, 2007).

Educational institutions may unintentionally perpetuate discrimination and biases through the way courses are assigned to faculty members. Diversity courses may be taught almost exclusively by adjunct faculty and/or faculty of color due to perceived and actual concerns about students’ course evaluations, and the nature of the content. This may lead to professors and content becoming marginalized (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 2008). Diversity and social justice content may focus on “each other” rather than on the meaning and significance of the personal and institutional dimensions of privilege and power (Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel, 2011; Rothenberg, 2016).

Cultural immersion experiences combined with critical consciousness-raising challenge students to actively examine themselves, their own biases and their roles as oppressors. As a result, students grow in self-awareness and cultural humility. The skills and awareness developed in this course are not quickly converted to mastery, but rather begin the practice of questioning ourselves from a cultural humility stance. Cultural humility is a reflexive skill we should continue to develop throughout our careers as social workers.

The extended weekend format is both feasible and attractive to distance education and non-traditional students. The

hybrid format supports high quality instructional delivery and a feeling of safety in preparing for discussion and interaction with stigmatized communities. The course also developed students' capacity for critical reflection—an awareness of how one is informed by one's own culture and makes sense of cultural differences subjectively. These skills, though difficult to define and quantify, are becoming increasingly important as students seek employment, opportunities for advocacy, and social change within the global context.

### Limitations

This approach to teaching cross cultural competence and cultural humility may be useful for teaching similar social work courses and seminars. However, the authors have identified several limitations of this model. For those located in a region near Chicago, travel may be feasible. This intensive course was not feasible for students living too far from the Chicago region. Several other students were not able to participate due to time or cost constraints. This may have led to sample bias. Another limitation involves the small number of participants, two groups of 21 and 20 students, respectively. Finally, the inclusion of faculty members as participants in the reflexive learning process may have contributed to bias. In spite of these limitations, this study serves as a starting point for future studies aiming to identify ways in which intercultural competencies are developed among social work students and practitioners.

### Conclusions and Implications

We need to address the lack of congruence between the mission and values of social work and social work practices, particularly in academia (Deepak et al., 2015). Social work students are typically required to complete a course on cultural competence and diversity. However, such a course may not fully prepare them to see how they are connected to systems that confer power and privilege. Without such understanding, social workers are not able to confront systems of power, privilege and oppression within and outside themselves. Knowledge-based curricula serve to educate students about marginalized groups,

such as members of the LGBT community. Nevertheless, without a critical analysis of structural and institutional features of oppression, such curricula may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes and alienate those with whom we work (Rothenburg, 2016). Cultural humility is needed to empower communities and promote social and economic development.

Well-planned and evaluated hybrid-experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry and promote interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, intercultural competence and other professional and intellectual skills. Arguably, the needs of distance education students may be well served by modifying the traditional face-to-face classroom methods of teaching diversity in social work and combining online and immersion learning models. Such courses may also serve to develop students' e-social work skills, which is of strategic importance to the profession (López Peláez & Díaz, 2016).

The course proposes a model for professional development and continuing education of more advanced practitioners. Finally, the course provides a general framework for development of collaboration between social workers and sociologists, urban centers for culture, and distance education sites seeking new approaches to developing intercultural competency and cultural humility from across the globe.

## References

- Anderson-Meger, J. (2011). Critical thinking and e-learning in social work education. *International Journal of Business, Humanities, and Technology*, 1(2), 17–27.
- Arnold, N., & Paulus, T. (2010). Using a social networking site for experiential learning: Appropriating, lurking, modeling and community building. *Internet and Higher Education*, 13, 188–196.
- Butin, D. W. (2006). The limits of service learning in higher education. *The Review of Higher Education*, 29(4), 473–498.
- Chesebro, S., Nelson, E., Schmidt, P., & Holloway, A. (2010). *Coming home again: The Chicago Center 1970-2010*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Center for Urban Life and Culture.
- Coe Regan, J. A., & Freddolino, P. P. (2008). *Integrating technology into the social work curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

- Deepak, A. C., Rountree, M. A., & Scott, J. (2015). Delivering diversity and social justice in social work education: The power of context. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 26(2), 107–125. DOI: 10.1080/10428232.2015.1017909
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd Ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Drabble, L., Sen, S., & Oppenheimer, S. Y. (2012). Integrating a trans-cultural perspective into social work curriculum: A descriptive and exploratory study. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 32(2), 204–221. DOI:10.1080/08841233.2012.670087
- Freire, P. (1970/2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Giesler, M. A. (2013). Teaching note: Cultural immersion in the classroom: Using consciousness-raising groups to enhance diversity competence. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 18(1), 173–181. Retrieved from <http://jbsw.org/doi/abs/10.5555/basw.18.1.h78464664v23mw32?journalCode=basw>
- Hernández, S. H., & Dunbar, E. (2007). Social work practice and education in México. *Social Work Education*, 25(1), 52–60. DOI: 10.1080/02615470500477896
- Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington Jr., E. L., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. doi:10.1037/a0032595
- International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW). (2012). *The global agenda for social work and social development commitment to action*. (missing info)
- Jani, J. S., Pierce, D., Ortiz, L., & Sowbel, L. (2011). Access to intersectionality, content to competence: The evolution of diversity standards in social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 47, 283–301.
- Koch, J. M., Ross, J. B., Wendell, J., & Aleksandrova-Howell, M. (2014). Results of immersion service learning activism with peers: Anticipated and surprising. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 42(8), 1215–1246. DOI:10.1177/0011000014535955
- Le-Doux, C. & Montalvo, F. (2008). Multicultural content in social work graduate programs. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 7(1–2) 37–55.
- Lee, E., & Priester, M. (2014). Who is The Help? Use of film to explore diversity. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 29(1), 92–104. doi:10.1177/088609913509545
- López Peláez, A. & Díaz, H. L. (2016). Social work challenges in the XXI Century: Citizenship, technology, and e-Social Work. In A. López Peláez (Ed.), *Twenty-first century challenges in social work* (pp. 29–53). Spain: Thomson-Reuters Aranzadi.



- Loya, M. A., & Cuevas, M. (2010). Teaching racism: Using experiential learning to challenge the status quo. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 30(3), 288–299. DOI:10.1080/08841233.2010.497130
- Malamud, M. (2011). It's "better to be informed" about tech tools: Social media is playing a prominent role in profession's future. *NASW News*, 56(6), 5–7.
- Marshall, J. D., & Wieling, E. (2000). Promoting MFT diversity through "cultural plunges." *Family Therapy*, 27, 88–99.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5–12.
- Miller, J., Donner, S., & Fraser, E. (2004.) When ??? (missing word?) is tough: Taking on conversations about race, sexual orientation, gender, class and other aspects of social identity. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 72(2), 377–392).
- Miller, J., Hyde, C., & Ruth, B. (2004). Teaching about race and racism in social work: Challenges for white educators. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 74(2), 409–426.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2007). *Indicators for the achievement of the NASW standards for cultural competence in social work practice*. Retrieved from: <https://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWCulturalStandardsIndicators2006.pdf>
- Numrich, P. (2005). *Muslims*. Encyclopedia of Chicago. Retrieved from: <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/865.html>
- Nieto, J. (2006). The cultural plunge: Cultural immersion as a means of promoting self-awareness and cultural sensitivity among student teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(1), 75–84.
- Ortega, R. M., & Coulborn Faller, K. (2011). Training child welfare workers from an intersectional cultural humility perspective: A paradigm shift. *Child Welfare*, 90(5), 27–49.
- Phelan, J. E. (2015). The use of E-learning in social work education. *Social Work*, 60(3), 257–264.
- Pratt, C. C., McGuigan, W. M., & Katzev, A. R. (2000). Measuring program outcomes: Using retrospective pretest methodology. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 21(3), 341–349. doi: 10.1177/109821400002100305
- Quiñones, R. (2007). *Consciousness in action: Toward an integral psychology of liberation and transformation*. Caguas, Puerto Rico: IL Publishing.
- Robbins, S. P., & Singer, J. B. (2014). The medium is the message: Integrating social media and social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 50, 387–390. DOI:10.1080/10437797.2014.916957
- Rothenberg, P. S. (2016). *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism*. New York: Worth Publishers.

- Schuldberg, J., Fox, N. S., Jones, C. A., Hunter, P., Mechard, M., & Stratton, M. (2012). Same, same but different: The development of cultural humility through an international volunteer experience. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(17), 17–30.
- Sherraden, M., Barth, R. P., Brekke, J., Faser, M. W., Manderscheid, R., & Padgett, D. K. (2015). *Social is fundamental: Introduction and context for Grand Challenges for Social Work* (Working Paper No. 1). Baltimore, MS: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1–16.
- Sherraden, M. S., Lough, B. J., & McBride, A. M. (2008). Effects of international volunteering and service: Individual and institutional predictors. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 19(4), 395–421.
- Todd, S. (2011). “That power and privilege thing”: Securing whiteness in community work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 22(2), 117–134.
- Wong, Y. R. (2004). Knowing through discomfort: A mindfulness-based critical social work pedagogy. *Critical Social Work*, 5(1). Retrieved from <http://www.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/knowing-through-discomfort-a-mindfulness-based-critical-social-work-pedagogy>

# The Debate on Minimum Income in Spain: Charity, Development or Citizen Right

Arantxa Hernández-Echegaray

Javier Pacheco-Mangas

*National University for Distance Education, Spain*

*The current retrenchment of social protection in capitalist welfare economies has triggered the expansion of aid-based practices in response to vulnerability, far removed from the ideals of social work. This study analyzes the practices and strategies of social workers that take part in regional minimum income systems (MIS) in Spain, using a qualitative approach that makes it possible to demonstrate leading professional discourses. Findings show a limited consolidation of regional policies on minimum income in Spain, resulting in significant regional disparities. Authors emphasize the need to increase social work's participation in formulating policies aimed at inclusion and consolidation of local and regional MIS. They propose that social work must move away from bureaucratic habits of social control and seek to strengthen citizenship and promote social development.*

*Key words: minimum income system; social work; professional discourses; social interventions; local social policies.*

## Introduction

The impact of the 2008 financial crisis reached a global scale, almost with the same intensity as the Stock Market Crash of 1929 (Piketty, 2015). The structural problems that weighed on Europe were underscored (Del Pino & Rubio, 2013), deepening a regressive tendency in social protection expenditure which began in the 1990s. The welfare systems of EU-28 countries were

transformed, but the negative consequences of austerity policies were especially striking in southern European countries, specifically in Spain and Greece (European Anti-Poverty Network [EAPN], 2105).

The reforms carried out in recent years hold a re-familiarization hidden within the functions undertaken by the State (education, healthcare and basic social services) in the absence of a recalibration of the growing social imbalance (Petmesidou & Guillén, 2015) and a tendency towards the re-commercialization of social protection (Del Pino & Rubio, 2013). With regard to Spain, in 2014, the AROPE (at risk of poverty or social exclusion) rate includes 29.2% of the population, which represents 122 million people (the European average is 24.4%). In Greece, it reaches 36% of the population, and both countries, Greece and Spain, lead Europe in this respect. Statistics show that a sharp increase occurred from 2008 to 2014 (EAPN, 2015).

The 7th Report on social development and exclusion (Fundación FOESSA, 2014) reveals that, in the last seven years, the social divide has widened and the fully integrated population is increasingly smaller. The effect of the 2008 financial crisis has deepened the dualism of Spanish society, significantly impoverishing the middle and lower classes. In Spain, exclusion mostly affects young people and those who, before the crisis, were already vulnerable or marginalized. These include ethnic minority groups such as immigrants and gypsies. The crisis has impoverished the population, and most significantly, the middle class (Tezanos, Sotomayor, Sánchez-Morales & Díaz, 2013). This distinguishes the 2008 crisis from other previous crises. This crisis has affected “heads of households,” including integrated and excluded citizens. The number of the “working poor” increased from 11.7% in 2013 to 14.2% in 2014 due to the increase in the number of part-time employees. This affected 16% of workers during the second quarter of 2015 (EAPN, 2015). Thus, employment is not an effective protective factor against poverty. Poverty has been compounded by a decrease in wage compensation and the freezing of the Multiplier for the Public Income Index (IPREM) in 2010.

The Living Conditions Survey conducted by the National Statistics Institute (INE) shows an increase in the percentage of people under the poverty line, going from 20.4% in 2015 to 22.1% in 2014 (INE, 2016). Poverty in Spain mostly affects families and

children. Thirty point five percent of minors live in relative poverty, 15.7% live in severe poverty, and 9.5% suffer from severe material deprivation (Save the Children, 2016).

These new families have not been targeted for social services and they are becoming a highly vulnerable group because of this lack of institutional protection (Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo, Osca Segovia, & López Peláez, 2013). Such families do not seek institutional support, but rather seek the support of their families and relatives, further impoverishing one another and generating the phenomenon referred to as “family-induced poverty” (Tezanos et al., 2013). Households which include minors and which are headed by women experience double exclusion. The empowerment of these households requires reconciliation and child poverty prevention efforts. Therefore, some authors claim that policies against poverty and social exclusion have been encountering the material and social consequences of the crisis and have not adapted to newly emerging social realities (Alguacil, 2012; Laparra & Pérez Eransus, 2010; Tezanos et al., 2013). Strategies to fight poverty include minimum income systems (MIS). MIS has been inadequate, even though it is supposed to represent a citizen “safety net” when public and private systems of social protection fail (Moreno, 2001).

Civil society efforts to meet basic necessities (soup kitchens, food and clothing distribution, eviction assistance, etc.) have emerged, given the lack of an effective government response. Civil sector initiatives have had a direct impact on social services and models of social work practice. Their strategies go from guaranteeing rights to responding to needs through charity, philanthropy and solidarity (Marí-Klose & Martínez Pérez, 2015; Martínez, Cruz, & Ioakimidis, 2014). This presents a dual reality: (1) The lack of real policies for citizen development; and (2) the responsibility of social work professionals for managing this new social context.

This research study sought to explore this situation by interviewing community social workers managing aid to families in the Spanish autonomous communities of Castile and León, and Andalusia. The first goal of this study was determine if public policies formulated in response to the crisis have been effective in alleviating needs or reducing social vulnerability.

The MIS in Spain has experienced a steady increase in the number of beneficiaries and budgetary resources available to it. In spite of this, there are many inconsistencies from one autonomous community to the next related to regulations and obligations. These imbalances, or substantial differences, undermine social rights by region, in violation of the principles of Article 9.2 of the Spanish Constitution. This article requires citizens' access to full participation and integration in economic life under equal conditions. It also highlights the duty of public authorities to remove obstacles to access this right (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad, 2015).

The autonomous community of Andalusia is currently debating the modification of these regulations. Because of this, it now has the ability to formulate new policies to effectively guarantee material coverage of citizens and proper social inclusion. Such policies must be consistent with existing laws related to basic income, enacted in response to the financial crisis. Laws in response to the crisis can be observed at the various levels of government in the areas of housing, employment, family and income. The litmus test for the effectiveness of these laws is the extent to which participants believe they solve their problems.

This study also sought to determine if social workers are influencing social policy and contributing to the transformation of the reality of these families. This issue is related to others beyond the scope of this study, such as the professional autonomy of social workers and their role within bureaucratic organizations and in relation to institutional philosophies.

These topics are not addressed in depth in this article, given limited scope of it. Nevertheless, we will discuss them briefly, given their significance to the profession. Let's put these issues in context. Mary Ellen Richmond proposed that social work is based on three pillars: social (social reform), professional (social intervention), and disciplinary (social research) (Berasaluze, 2009). The metaphor of pillars might not be the best, given that, unlike social work, it is associated with a monolithic image of something disconnected from its surroundings. The three components, reform, intervention and research, are three dimensions of the concept of social work that must be balanced and intertwined. Unfortunately, currently there is an imbalance. The components of social reform and development are overshadowed by assistentialist intervention associated with social

adjustment, control, charity and outdated forms of welfare. To solve this we propose social change promoted by a modern state that guarantees social rights. Toren (1969) explains how “in its history, social work has long had a double focus: on social reform, on the one hand; and on facilitating adjustment of individuals to existing situations, on the other (Meyer, cited in Toren, 1969, p. 160). This research study focused on examining the narratives of social work professionals related to their participation with MIS to explore this issue. It attempts to describe and explain the complexities and contradictions the profession experiences in this area. This study sought to understand how the mission and strategy of social work are linked to policies against poverty and exclusion, by focusing on two autonomous communities of Spain: Castile-León and Andalusia. This article analyzes whether MIS and the profession of social work in Spain are fulfilling their goals.

### Ambivalence in social work: Charity oversight and development oriented social change

When discussing exclusion, we almost inevitably make reference to integration, participation and democracy. Individuals suffering from exclusion have experienced many failures and lack almost everything (Sánchez Alias & Jiménez Sánchez, 2013). Social integration or reintegration will enable them to fully participate in society with all the corresponding rights and obligations. Integration involves the exercise of rights as citizens in the civil, political, social and economic arenas (Marshall, 1997 [1949]). The exercise of economic citizenship implies the implementation “of broader and more universal social services (as a fourth effective pillar of the welfare state), of policies that make housing accessible and of social wages or integration income [...]. Our objective should be a general reintegration of economic aspects” (Tezanos, 2008 p. 28).

In that context, social work is “a profession based on an academic discipline and practice that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people” (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014). Often, social workers engage in welfare and assistance instead of reform. Although social work’s mission calls



for building bridges towards economic development, in practice and in the current environment, making this a reality is complicated. The social reality following the crisis casts doubt on the strengthening of social rights as understood before the crisis (López i Casanovas, 2015), and on the sustainability of the European social model. Neoliberal logic and austerity policies reduce access to social rights by the most vulnerable sectors of society. These measures have hurt social welfare systems and

Table 1. Consequences of the crisis on citizenship, social services and social work.

Citizenship	Social Services	Social Work
Social vulnerability	Lack of social protection	Marginalized social work
Unemployment (sustained over time)	Budget cuts	Aid-based-approach
Lack of money; Depletion of reserves/savings; Expenditure restraint; Family-induced poverty	Immobility	Focus on welfare Alleviating
Coverage of basic	Reduced Stress	Social Control
Loss of housing	Reduced social resources	Traditional responses to new realities
Increase in demand	Saturation of services	Red tape, bureaucracy
Spiral of exclusion	Withdrawal of public protective action	Commitment and action

Source: Compiled by author.

have marginalized the profession. The consequences of the crisis in the three areas are summarized in Table 1.

Decreased access to social rights is caused by neoliberal logic and austerity measures. All of this stems from the existing tensions between social and economic policies and the policy models that derive from both of them. Aguilar Idáñez (2013) has identified four models: (1) social policy as charity; (2) social policy as a guarantee of social control; (3) social policy as a mechanism of social reproduction; and (4) social policy as the fulfillment of the social right to citizenship. Thus, the welfare state as an institution that implements social policies (Fernández García, de Lorenzo, & Vázquez, 2012), takes on a different appearance, depending on the model. Consequently, social work practice also varies from being assistance-oriented, charitable, philanthropic and altruistic, to focusing on promoting of social rights.

## Materials and Methods

This study relies on a qualitative methodology that includes the analysis of narratives, as proposed by Wetherell and Potter (1996). The methodology is based on the concepts of function, variability, construction and the unit of analysis selected for interpretation. The latter represents the main contribution of this method for the analysis of narratives and research. Qualitative analysis seeks to identify key concepts that repeat themselves in patterns. These “can be considered as the essential elements used by speakers to construct versions of actions, cognitive processes and other phenomena” (Wetherell & Potter, 1996, p. 66).

Data were collected from primary sources, including in-depth interviews with twenty-eight social work professionals from Andalusia and Castile-León, who provide municipal social services, autonomous community social services and/or civic organizations working with the poor. Participants were selected according to predetermined heterogeneous criteria (Íñiguez & Vázquez, 2008) from groups of professionals. Participants were required to meet professional experience criteria (at least 5 years) and to be actively involved in their workplace in the implementation of minimum income programs. The study also took into account the variety of names given to primary care

municipal social services facilities in each of the autonomous communities. Thus, for Andalusia, the name used is Centre for Community Social Services (CSSC), while the name in Castile-León is Centre for Social Action (CEAS).

### *Data Collection Procedures*

Data were collected in the months of January and February 2015. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and codified. The interviews included open-ended questions covering eight themes related to the subject of the study. An interview guide was developed to explore different aspects of the MIS and their relationship to the professional activity of participants. The instrument included: (a) definition and objectives of benefits or services received; (b) cash benefits; (c) program duration; (d) definition of potential beneficiaries; (e) mechanisms of inter-administrative coordination for program implementation; (f) collaboration and responsibility of social initiative organizations for program development and implementation; (g) program evaluation plan; and (h) personal evaluation of the minimum income system in their respective autonomous community. Participants were informed about the research project and confidentiality was assured. Participants were also promised a copy of the study findings.

The *Atlas.ti* (version 6) software was used to conduct the analysis, which was divided into two phases: a textual phase and a conceptual analysis phase. In the first phase, the interview transcripts were entered in the program, facilitating the organization and identification of significant text excerpts (quotes) associated with the thematic areas and objectives of the study. Each excerpt was assigned an identifier that briefly described the discourse variations associated with its function. In the second phase, meticulous reading was carried out, observing the relationships between the identifiers obtained, so that it would be possible to observe discourse regularities which reflect the reality studied in similar ways. The five recurring representations used most by all the individuals are the five interpretive schemes obtained.

With regard to methodological limitations, the search for regular discourse patterns should be deepened using group research techniques, both with the professionals interviewed and

with other professionals with similar profiles, with the additional possibility of incorporating other geographical contexts of Spain and Europe, which would enable a study with a comparative policy approach. Moreover, it would also be pertinent to ascertain the perception of the individuals who hold these rights, by studying their relationship with the system itself and with the professionals participating in the process.

## Findings

Several patterns emerged from the narratives in spite of their diversity, the geographic origin of the participants, and the administrative and regulatory variability of each region. Views revolved around the nature and delivery of benefits. As a result, the following categories were created:

- The professional as an agent for stability control versus the professional as an agent for social change
- Resource logic over the logic of need
- Obligation over negotiation
- A constant: insufficient and ineffective policies
- Stigmatization and blame

### *The professional as an agent for stability control versus the professional as an agent for social change*

A popular perception among interviewed social workers is that a guaranteed minimum income is a final solution to the problem of poverty. Often interviewed social workers viewed their role in relation to MIS reduced to paperwork. For this reason, many social workers believe that their work does not come near the ideal of the social work profession in the assessment of family needs. Their role in this process is reduced to assuring compliance with a set of requirements, and processing information about benefits. This makes it impossible to study and evaluate the case in a timely manner. Social workers reported feeling unhappy and outraged about having to implement policies and

practices related to MIS. To escape this situation, professionals use chicanery to contribute to the well-being of families, under the ideal of social justice. This poses an ethical dilemma. On one hand, they have a duty to follow the rules, and on the other hand, they feel an obligation to satisfy the overall needs of the families. The following excerpts illustrate this situation:

We have assumed a predominant oversight function in our professional practice to the detriment of everything else. Because of this and other things, we are unable to establish a relationship based on trust with the people we help. (social worker from CEAS)

The role of community social services in the process is very weak. The committee has the power to grant or deny, and reports or views of social workers contribute very little. Also, the role of the community social worker in awarding benefits is not taken into account. (social worker from CSSC)

In the case of immigrants and minimum income, how will they gain access unless they lie and unless the mafias give them the documentation that they need to apply for the income? (social worker from CEAS)

### *Resource logic versus the logic of need*

Professionals complain about the rigidity associated with the implementation of rules, the need to play tricks and the long delays associated with providing assistance following social emergencies. This means that minimum income, despite the renewal of its legislation, does not respond adequately to the social needs of citizens. In this situation, participants see social intervention as a flexible and creative process, based on a relationship of trust and the alliance between the 'professional helper' and the 'person helped.' They feel it is difficult to put this alliance to work due to the shortcomings of policies and excessive bureaucratization. This forces social workers to focus the process on the resource more than on the person. This problem is made clear in the delivery and the monitoring of social interventions with families, as shown in the following selected excerpts:

Resources are more important than people. The system we have makes it hard. We continue to worship a culture of documents, which is incompatible with our theoretical discourse: person-centered comprehensive care. We say one thing, but in reality we do something else. (social worker from CSSC)

The delay in accessing the benefit is unacceptable, and this corrupts it from the outset. What kind of support, trust and respect can we hope for? It is a form of institutional abuse. How will these people respond to us later?" (social worker from CEAS)

### *Obligation versus negotiation*

The biggest challenge faced by social workers revolves around ethics. Regulations are in conflict with some of the core principles of social work, such as self-determination, participation, respect for others and equality. This scenario suggests a high level of professional arbitrariness, given the diverse nature of resources used as compensation and the lack of common institutional instructions for the design and implementation of client integration pathways. Participants identified the lack of systematization of processes for inclusion of individuals and families in minimum income programs:

We leave a narrow margin for participation of individuals in the development of their personalized integration project. We perpetuate the inherited paternalism. (social worker from CEAS)

Can you force someone to make changes in their life for a six-month benefit that takes nine months to be awarded? (social worker from CSSC)

### *A constant: insufficient and ineffective policies*

Dearth is a common denominator in social services. The amounts of the minimum income are limited and families feel obligated to obtain supplementary non-employment income from the underground economy or marginal activities. Sometimes the combined incomes exceed the amount of the minimum wage, which discourages participation in the labor

market. This situation entails an ethical dilemma for social workers. Moreover, the disconnection from active policies for family protection diminish the opportunities for real social re-integration. The resumption of the benefit, after it has been suspended due to employment, entails a period without income of up to four months before disbursement.

There is a bureaucratic blockade that disregards the right recognized by the legislation and it does not motivate people to accept short-term jobs, because it takes too long to resume payment of the benefit, which is unacceptable in precarious economies. (social worker from CEAS)

It is extremely difficult to work holistically in all affected and vulnerable areas. Work in a network is hard to put into practice. There is no capacity for managing integration pathways either. Sometimes it seems like more importance is given to bureaucratic management or to the requirements of the system than to designing integration pathways or developing a commitment with the beneficiary. Furthermore, choosing to work is penalized. Labor integration is not coordinated. I do not think that this kind of assistance favors autonomy. (social worker from the third sector)

### *Stigmatization and blame*

Professionals believe this social policy conceals the neo-liberal notion of blaming the victim for his/her circumstances throughout the administrative procedure. Several professionals argue, for instance, that these benefits are an instrument for social peace or form of dependence on welfare. The professionals suggest changing the paradigm of this policy to proposals that are closer to the minimum income. Besides being blamed, recipients of income are stigmatized and viewed as excluded or marginalized. This calls for another path to integration:

The applicant subjects himself to the administration under suspicion of fraud. It is an institutional abuse. Thus, the social wage contributes to perpetuating misery. (social worker from CSSC)

There is undue questioning, which encapsulates blame for the citizen who accesses or requests the benefit. How far will



this go, you wonder? You feel like they are violating your limits of privacy through the professional intervention: family aspects, sanitary aspects, relational aspects... Also, by dealing with so many professionals with the assistance, the person loses his dignity counting [how many people he's interacted with]. (social worker from CEAS)

Might it be necessary to redesign how people are divided structurally and economically? More stigmatization for the same people as always? We have to stop penalizing those most vulnerable: immigrants, young people, single-parent families, for example, in the case of the compatibility of the benefit with unemployment subsidies. (social worker from CEAS)

## Discussion

Titmuss (1974) refers to social workers as state workers', and Illich (1977) uses the term "disabling profession" to define professional charity and assistance practices that fail to empower citizens. The discourse of the interviewed professionals shows a pattern of identifying social workers as guarantors and executors of public policies. Social workers assume a supervisory role over mandatory rules, with which they are not comfortable. At the same time, they conform and do not confront or transform the current situation. This has already been documented in the current social work literature (Pacheco-Mangas & Palma-García, 2015). Similarly, De la Red and Barranco Exposito (2014) pose the need to redefine the role of social workers to improve interventions in new realities and increasingly complex scenarios. Social workers should be actively involved in the formulation and implementation of social policies. Both studies redefine the "social" in "social work" as a consubstantial element that has become blurred in the practices of recent decades (Hanssen, Hutchinson, Lyngstad, & Sandvin, 2015).

In this context, social service delivery systems and, by extension, regional minimum income programs embody the paradox of creating mixed systems (welfare mix) that evenly combine public and private action. In other words, the privatization of public services is taking place through private action of non-profit and non-governmental organizations, whose work will significantly impact professional social work practice.

Generally, such privatization takes place when public administration shifts the responsibility for providing social services to non-governmental organizations by funding them (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996, p. 49).

From this study we can infer a significant disconnect between the social reality and the implementation of MIS. Professional interventions in the context of MIS have led to oversight, as opposed to strengthening processes for change and transformation. This process of bureaucratic intervention prevents the social worker from connecting with the consumer and concentrating on intervening based on predetermined scripts (Idareta-Goldaracena & Ballesterio-Izquierdo, 2013). This gives rise to numerous ethical dilemmas which hinder the social intervention process (Ballesterio, Úriz, & Viscarret, 2012). These practices inhibit creativity and innovation in social intervention and prevent progress in social services. They promote welfare dependence, a client-based approach that generates frustration among professionals, and a “perceived inability to help society achieve its goals and solve its problems” (Schön, 1998, p. 47).

Social intervention in MIS must aim at transformation. On one hand, professionals need to assume their role as agents for change, which they have lost due to their oversight and monitoring roles. On the other hand, they must adopt a proactive attitude towards change, overcoming the resistance to change of social protection systems. They must not engage in practices that deplete the autonomy and the responsibility of citizens. Furthermore, progress must be made in the formulation of social policies. Social work professionals must be represented and actively involved in the policy-making process to reduce vulnerability and social exclusion. To this end, the regulations must be transformed early on. Social exclusion is complex by nature. Regulations must address this complexity and be flexible in their application to avoid generating exclusion.

The views of social work professionals do not vary regionally. However, there are significant differences in the content of pertinent regulations. Progress on state MIS regulations would increase consistency and strengthen the mandate of Article 9.2 of the Spanish Constitution that calls for equality of rights for all citizens. Such equality must be provided regardless of the region of residence when marginalized or at risk of social exclusion. Professionals, in their service-citizen relationship, must

avoid falling into the paradigm of labor activation conditionality characteristic of neoliberal ideology and the capitalist system (Torre Millán, 2014). They must counter biases arising from their personal experiences or social class (Cortinas, 2012a, 2012b) or from their desire to promote acculturation while undermining cultural diversity (Ayala Rubio, 2009).

Our priority should be to prevent exclusion by recognizing the reality of child poverty and the absence of policies for family protection. Spain's economic crisis has highlighted the inadequacy of systems for protecting the most vulnerable groups. This is happening in a context in which family models are changing, moving from extended families to nuclear and single-person families. This puts family members at risk. Thus, our traditional model of social protection is in danger given that it is highly dependent on the family to provide care and support (Sarti, Alberio, & Terraneo, 2013).

Failure to reverse this situation may lead to losing two generations: one made up of qualified and unemployed young people, and the other made up of minors living in homes impoverished by the crisis, where the opportunities to get out of poverty are fewer, consistent with the culture of poverty theory (Lewis, 1972). We must learn from the lessons of the long Spanish charitable history (Aguilar Hendrickson, 2013) and pay attention not only to citizens' needs. We propose a model in which social workers recover their role as agents for change and transformation (López Peláez, 2015).

## References

- Aguilar Hendrickson, M. (2013). Los servicios sociales en la tormenta. *Documentación Social*, 166, 145–167.
- Aguilar Idáñez, M<sup>a</sup>. J. (2013). *Trabajo social. Concepto y metodología*. Madrid: Paraninfo y Consejo General del Trabajo Social.
- Alguacil, J. (2012). La quiebra del incompleto sistema de Servicios Sociales en España. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 25(1), 63–74. DOI: 10.5209/rev\_CUTS.2012.v25.n1.38434.
- Ayala Rubio, A. (2009). Secretos a voces: Exclusión social y estrategias profesionales de construcción de la obligatoriedad en la intervención social vinculada a la Renta Mínima de Inserción (RMI) con el colectivo de etnia gitana. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 22, 19–40.

- Ballesterio Izquierdo, A., Úriz Pemán, M. J., & Viscarret Garro, J. J. (2012). Dilemas éticos de las trabajadoras y trabajadores sociales en España. *Papers: Revista de Sociologia*, 97(4), 875–898.
- Berasaluze, A. (2009). El devenir del Trabajo Social en clave de género. *Zerbitzuan. Revista de Servicios Sociales*, 46, 133–140.
- Cortinas, J. (2012a). La identidad profesional de los trabajadores sociales como elemento clave en el acceso a los programas de rentas mínimas: El caso de Catalunya. *Zerbitzuan. Revista de Servicios Sociales*, 51, 95–105. DOI:10.5569/1134 7147/51.06
- Cortinas, J. (2012b). Las normas de clase como base del acceso a las nuevas políticas sociales para hacer frente a la precariedad vital. *Papeles del CEIC*, 2, 1–25.
- De la Red, N., & Barranco Expósito, C. (2014). Trabajo social y participación en las políticas sociales. *Azarbe. Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Bienestar*, 3, 39–45.
- Del Pino, E. & Rubio, M<sup>a</sup>. J. (2013). El estudio comparado de las transformaciones del Estado de Bienestar y las Políticas Sociales: Definiciones, metodología, temas de investigación. En Del Pino, E. y Rubio, M<sup>a</sup>. J., *Los estados de bienestar en la encrucijada. Políticas sociales en perspectiva comparada* (pp. 27–68). Madrid: Tecnos.
- Dominelli, L., & Hoogvelt, A. (1996). Globalization and the technocratization of social work. *Critical Social Policy*, 16(47), 45–62.
- European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN). (2015). *El estado de la pobreza. 5º Informe. Seguimiento del indicador de riesgo de pobreza y exclusión social en España. 2009-2014*. Retrieved from: [http://www.eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/recursos/1/1444835952\\_20151015\\_el\\_estado\\_de\\_la\\_pobreza\\_seguimiento\\_del\\_aroep\\_2014\\_pdf](http://www.eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/recursos/1/1444835952_20151015_el_estado_de_la_pobreza_seguimiento_del_aroep_2014_pdf).
- Fernández García, T., De Lorenzo, R., & Vázquez, O. (Eds.) (2012). *Diccionario de trabajo social*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Fundación FOESSA. (2014). *VII Informe sobre exclusión y desarrollo social*. Retrieved from <http://www.foessa2014.es/informe/> (25 de marzo de 2016).
- Hanssen, J. K., Hutchinson, G. S., Lyngstad, R., & Sandvin, J. T. (2015). What happens to the social in social work? *Nordic Social Work Research*, 5(sup1), 115–126.
- Idareta-Goldaracena, F., & Ballesterio-Izquierdo, A. (2013). Ética, paternalismo y burocracia en Trabajo Social. *Portularia. Revista de Trabajo Social*, 13(1), 27-35. DOI:10.5218/prts.2013.0004.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2014). *Global definition of social work*. Retrieved from: <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- Illich, I. (1977). Disabling professions. E. I. Illich, I. K. Zola, I. K., McKnight, Caplan, J. J. y Shaiken, H., *Disabling professions* (pp. 11–39). London: Marion Boyars.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). (2016). *Nota de prensa. Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida*. Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np969.pdf>.

- Íñiguez, L., y Vázquez, F. (2008). *Entrevista grupal. Curso de métodos cualitativos de investigación en ciencias sociales*. Maestría en Ciencias Sociales. Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades. Universidad de Guadalajara (2008, september 8–12). Retrieved from [http://www.uv.mx/dgda/files/2013/02/zEntrevista\\_grupoal.pdf](http://www.uv.mx/dgda/files/2013/02/zEntrevista_grupoal.pdf)
- Laparra, M., & Pérez Eransus, B. (2010). *El primer impacto de la crisis en la cohesión social en España*. Madrid: FOESSA.
- Lewis, O. (1972). *La cultura de la pobreza*. Barcelona: Anagrama.
- López i Casanovas, G. (2015). *El bienestar desigual: Qué queda de los derechos y beneficios sociales tras la crisis*. Barcelona: Península.
- López Peláez, A. (2015). *Social work challenges in the XXI century: Perspectives from the United States*. Pamplona: Thomson-Reuters Aranzadi.
- Marí-Klose, P., & Martínez Pérez, A. (2015). Empobrecimiento en tiempos de crisis: Vulnerabilidad y (des) protección social en un contexto de adversidad. *Panorama Social*, 22, 11–26.
- Martínez Herrero, I., Cruz Santos, C., & Ioakimidis, V. (2014). Reconceptualizando el trabajo social en Europa del sur: El retorno de la política en tiempos de malestares. *Servicios Sociales y Política Social*, 106, 11–24.
- Marshall, T. H. (1997 [1949]). Ciudadanía y clase social. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 79, 297–344.
- Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad. (2015). *Informes de Rentas mínimas de Inserción*. Retrieved from <http://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/serviciosSociales/RentasMinimas/home.htm>.
- Moreno, L. (Ed.). (2001). *Pobreza y exclusión: la “malla de seguridad” en España*. Madrid: Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Pacheco-Mangas, J., & Palma-García, M. (2015). Servicios sociales, crisis y reforma local: respuestas discursivas desde el Trabajo Social. *Trabajo Social Global. Revista de Investigaciones en Intervención Social*, 5(8), 47–67.
- Petmesidou, M., & Guillén, A. M. (2015). Economic crisis and austerity in southern Europe. Threat or opportunity for building a sustainable welfare state? *European Social Observation*, 18. Retrieved from [http://www.ose.be/files/publication/OSEPaperSeries/Petmesidou\\_Guillen\\_2015\\_OseResearchPaper18.pdf](http://www.ose.be/files/publication/OSEPaperSeries/Petmesidou_Guillen_2015_OseResearchPaper18.pdf)
- Piketty, T. (2015). *El Capital en el siglo XXI*. Barcelona: RBA.
- Sánchez Alías, A., & Jiménez Sánchez, M. (2013). Exclusión social: Fundamentos teóricos y de la intervención. *Trabajo Social Global. Revista de Investigaciones en Intervención Social*, 3(4), 133–156.
- Sarti, S., Alberio, M., & Terraneo, M. (2013). Health inequalities and the welfare state in European families. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 40(1), 103–130.
- Save the Children. (2016). *Datos de pobreza infantil y exclusión social en España*. Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.es/trabajo-ong/pobreza-infantil-espana/datos-pobreza-y-exclusion>.

- Segado Sánchez-Cabezudo, S., Osca Segovia, A., & López Peláez, A. (2013). Trabajo social con familias y conflicto familia-trabajo. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 26(2), 253–264. doi: 10.5209/rev\_CUTS.2013.v26.n2.39379
- Schön, D. (1998). *El profesional reflexivo. Cómo piensan los profesionales cuando actúan*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Tezanos, J. F. (2008). Exclusión social, democracia y ciudadanía económica. La libertad de los iguales. *Revista del Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales*, 75, 73–86.
- Tezanos, J. F., Sotomayor, E., Sánchez, R., & Díaz, V. (2013). *En los bordes de la pobreza. Las familias vulnerables en contextos de crisis*. Madrid: Sistema.
- Titmuss, R. M. (1974). *Social policy: An introduction*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Toren, N. (1969). Semi-professionalism and social work: A theoretical perspective. In A. Etzioni (Ed.), *The semi-professions and their organization. Teachers, nurses and social workers* (pp. 141–195). New York: Free Press.
- Torre Millán, I. (2015). Política vasca de garantía de ingresos: Los riesgos de criminalización de la pobreza de un modelo condicional. *Zerbitzuan Revista de Servicios Sociales*, 57, 91–102. DOI: 10.5569/1134-7147.57.05.
- Wetherell, M., & Potter, J. (1996). El análisis del discurso y la identificación de los repertorios interpretativos. In A. Gordo y J. Linaza (Eds.), *Psicologías, discursos y poder* (pp. 63–78). Madrid: Visor.

# Class Activist Lens for Teaching about Poverty

Susan Weinger

Linda Reeser

*Western Michigan University*

*The mission of social work is to serve the poor and oppressed and engage in social reform. This article proposes a conceptual framework, and teaching and practice strategies to equip students to understand poverty from a class perspective. The action component is to politicize practice and become allies with the poor in resisting injustice and promoting their social and economic development.*

*Key Words: Poverty, Classism, Social Change, Activism, Human Rights, Economic Justice, Development*

## Introduction: Charity vs. Development

The nature of charity forgoes an egalitarian relationship between the giver and the receiver. The power is unequal in that the giver is voluntarily deciding whether to give, how much, to whom, how often and under what conditions. The giver deems who is worthy and deserving of receiving their largesse. There is a notion of the receiver's dependency, neediness and perhaps inferiority on the part of those providing the charity. Donors are regarded as having higher status and can relish in their good feelings of being altruistic (Trattner, 1989; Tropman, 1979). The conservative political paradigm proposes that people are responsible for their own fate and that they should be coerced to look after themselves; thus they must take responsibility for their own lives and be grateful for whatever charity



may be bestowed upon them (Mullaly, 2007). The “culture of poverty” theory proposes that the poor are the cause of their own problems. Consequently, systemic change is unnecessary. In contrast to the culture of poverty theory and charity perspective, this manuscript focuses on the theme of development. Development entails a more egalitarian relationship between social workers and those who have been disadvantaged because it suggests mutual respect and joint efforts between the “givers” and “receivers.” Development involves recognition of systemic forces that exploit and oppress population groups and the responsibility to make changes in these institutionalized forces (Dominelli, 1997; Midgley, 1997). The class activist framework presented in this article is founded on these ideas of development. Social work students and persons living in poverty, who gain greater awareness of macro factors maintaining poverty, will see the need for socio-economic development to occur and will be motivated to improve the quality of life of the poor. Social work students with this developmental perspective will learn to acknowledge the expertise of persons trapped in poverty, inspire hope in the possibility of change, and strategize with them about how to redistribute and develop resources, power and opportunities.

#### *Need for a Class Activist Framework*

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics declares that social workers need to “engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully” (NASW, 1996, p. 27). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates a competency for students to advance human rights and social and economic justice (CSWE, 2015). Clearly, social work has a mission to serve poor and oppressed people.

Social workers regard external factors as the primary causes of poverty (Bullock, 2004). Nevertheless, they also give credence to psychological and moral issues (Robinson, 2011). Reeser and Weinger (2012) found that students who support structural solutions for poverty hold biases about the poor, including a

belief in a culture of poverty. Students agreed that counseling is a route to poverty reduction.

The social work profession needs to prepare students to fulfill its mission. Social work literature critiques individual models of practice and calls us to move towards a structural model. Yet very few articles recommend how to add this to the curriculum (Fisher & Karger, 1997; Gasker, 2003). One article provides a "poverty awareness" framework for practice, but does not include social change principles nor methods for teaching about working with low-income clients (Krumer-Nevo, Weiss-Gal, & Monnickendam, 2009).

Schools have a mixed record when it comes to teaching about poverty. Some studies show that social work education influences students to attribute structural causes to poverty (Clark, 2007; Weaver & Yun, 2011). However, many students change from their initial desire to work with the poor to a preference for higher income clients by graduation (Limb & Organista, 2006). A study of Catholic MSW programs found a lack of reference to issues of poverty and low-income clients in syllabi (Pryce, 2010). In another study, this lack of content was found in Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) (Lehning, Vu, & Pintak, 2007).

Social work curricula emphasize diversity but may overlook the significance of classism (Pryce, 2010). When diversity is regarded as multiculturalism, it is likely to lead to a focus on culture and by extension the "culture of poverty," in spite of scholarly evidence that debunks the "culture of poverty theory" (Faver, Cavazos, & Trachte, 2005). Popular books that tout this theory are used as texts in some schools of social work (Osei-Kofi, 2005). Due to these gaps in social work education, the literature suggests helping students to overcome their biases and learn strategies suitable for low-income clients (Gasker, 2003; Krumer-Nevo et al., 2009; Staudy, 2011).

This article proposes a conceptual framework, methods for teaching about classism, and collaborative strategies for working with low-income clients. It is an "aware, reflect and act" paradigm (Abram, Slosar, & Walls, 2005; Freire, 1968). The framework should enable students to critically examine the societal construction of class, reflect about their personal biases and ideological perspectives, and discover their visions for a just society. It will allow them to share experiences and dialogue with

low-income people to acquire an awareness of everyday realities of poverty. A key principle of the framework is to place macro contextualization at the base of all social work practice (Fisher & Karger, 1997). A study of the use of power, its inequities, and methods to change the distribution of power is fundamental. The action component is to politicize practice and become allies with the poor in resisting injustice. Students should be critical co-investigators with the teacher and persons living in poverty to expand their knowledge, and rename reality according to their experience (Freire, 1968). New models for internships, social change projects and a community encounter are suggested.

### *Principles for Class Activism*

*Environmental forces.* We must provide students with a conceptual grounding so that they can analyze the environmental forces in the lives of their clients that serve as barriers to improving their quality of life and entrap them in poverty. It is important to expose students to policies and practices that lead to structural inequality, leaving some people bereft of resources and those at the top of the wealth distribution enriched. For example, the policy of devolution entails the federal government delegating spending power to state and local governments, allowing them to by-pass federal standards and decide whether to decrease resources and services for low-income persons (Jansson, 2017).

*Culture of poverty theory.* The culture of poverty theory helps us understand the prejudices against those with severely limited resources. Proponents and critics of this theory include Payne & Krabill (2002), Payne (1995) and Gorski (2006). The culture of poverty blames the victim and absolves society from any responsibility for ameliorating poverty. It portrays those with low income as being deficient and carrying this deficiency through the generations. The implications are that individuals and families need to change, not that society needs to redistribute resources, reform the tax system and provide liveable wages. In addition to theoretical instruction, poverty simulation exercises could expand students' understanding of what it is like to be poor and challenge them to recognize barriers to class mobility.

*Philosophical approaches and theories of justice.* Students need to engage in critical analysis before they are able to formulate their vision of a just society and engage in social change. This vision will provide professional goals to strive toward and the passion to direct their energies. Theories of justice, such as Rawls (1971), would permit students to consider how they would distribute resources. Rawls' theory asks what we would consider a fair and just distribution of resources if we were poor. Utilitarianism, in turn, proposes that we should assess consequences of actions based on the greatest good for the greatest number of people. As an alternative philosophical position, deontology (Friedrich, 1949), espouses that there are certain universal rules we need to follow since everyone needs to be respected, no matter what the consequences are for the majority of people. This and other philosophical approaches and theories can help students use critical thinking skills to develop their vision about what is fair and just in structuring society and distributing resources.

An experiential exercise to help students think about fairness and justice in the distribution of resources involves assigning students to groups and providing some groups with abundant resources, others with average resources, and others with hardly any resources. They are asked to complete a project and those who complete it first are labeled "winners." A little more time is allowed until more people can complete the project, and those who finish last are labeled "losers." Then students can dialogue about how resources are distributed in society at large and what is just and unjust, e.g., affirmative action policies.

*Critical analysis of power.* Students learn how the concentration of wealth allows the few to have inordinate power to set policies and structure the economic and political systems. The intersection of wealth and power in the political system creates a power elite that excludes the vast majority of the population. Students examine the policies, practices and political processes that stratify society, disadvantaging middle and low-income people and bestowing major advantages on the 1% (e.g., union busting, inequitable income tax structure, the personhood status of corporations, gentrification and Citizens vs. United). As a result, the rest of the population often feels powerless and fatalistic about changing the system. This critical analysis helps students appreciate the roots of the oppression of low-income

people. The rich can exclude low-income people from having any influence, even to the extent of disallowing their vote and invalidating democracy. In 2013, the Supreme Court eliminated the formula which mandated that states with a historical record of voter discrimination to be monitored by the federal government to be in compliance with equal voting rights (Caldwell, 2015). This law favors those who wish to lessen the voting power of the poor and persons of color, hence increasing the power of the wealthy. Experiential scenarios of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal & McBride, 1979) can help students visualize and symbolize misappropriation of power and give students an opening to step in, break up that power, and redistribute influence more equitably. Students see the oppression up close and see themselves as actors capable of creating change.

*Historical perspective.* A historical perspective enables students to have a contextual view of the treatment of the poor, the successful and unsuccessful attempts to ameliorate or eliminate their hardships, and the barriers and strategies used by those with a vested interest in perpetuating poverty. The adoption in England of the 1601 Poor Laws led to greater community responsibility and pejorative labeling. Our treatment of the poor has varied from forcing low-income people into poorhouses (Day & Schiele, 2013), to the War on Poverty effort to give low-income people money directly from the government to decide for themselves how to solve problems related to poverty. Students study the history of social movements, legislative reforms, and social action efforts. Social movements may include unionization, particularly the Rank and File movement led by the social worker Bertha Capen Reynolds (Reisch & Andrews, 2002). The Occupy Wall Street movement sought to raise consciousness about the inequality in society (VanGelder & Staff of Yes! Magazine, 2011). The Kensington Welfare Rights Organization focused on raising awareness, engaging in subversive action (e.g., taking over abandoned housing), and developed a poor people's university to educate leaders to end poverty (VanWormer, 2004). Legislative reforms during the Great Depression such as Social Security, reduced poverty dramatically (DeWitt, 2010). Past and current social movements, social actions and reforms can help students see that decreasing poverty is realistic and that we can learn from the past to set directions for future change.

In addition, students could learn about the struggle of the social work profession over focusing on service provision or on becoming a political force in the country. Studying the Code of Ethics would reveal the social work profession's aspirations to engage in social and political change domestically and globally. It demonstrates the unique paradigm of social work, the person-in-environment framework.

*Political practice.* Political practice requires an understanding that the oppression of individuals, families and groups is rooted in the societal context and requires critical analysis and actions to change the status quo. This type of practice does not necessarily require engaging in political activities with the government, such as voting or working in elections. It requires engaging in policy-sensitive practice (understanding how policies or lack of policies impact people) or policy-related practice (advocating for clients under the existing policies) or policy practice (developing, proposing, or seeking changes in policy), or any combination of the three (Jansson, 2014). For students concentrating in clinical work, it may mean sensitizing clients to the injustices of policies and empowering them to engage with others to create change.

Students analyze the interventions, policies and practices of their internship and work settings, for their potential to reinforce or challenge oppressive systems. In turn, they learn strategies to challenge systems that are insensitive to the needs of the people they serve. It is important to sensitize students to the need of balancing meeting clients' needs with working for systemic change to better meet those needs.

*Personal is political.* Students, by reflecting on their own lives, can recognize how they have been influenced by the socio-economic-political context and the privileges and/or sanctions/barriers incumbent upon their status. By analyzing the environmental context of their own lives, they are better able to directly understand the impact on their own lives and that of their clients. The dialectical relationship between people and society is explored to assess the influences that community/society has on us and the impacts that people can and have had on it. This dialectical process can be shared with clients to help them feel more powerful and see their problems as societal issues. The woman's movement serves as a powerful example of



consciousness-raising that assessed the given "reality" and replaced it with a reality more true to women's own experiences. This renaming led to actions creating greater equality for women (Bricker-Jenkins, Gottlieb, & Hooyman, 1991).

*Reflection/Action.* Students' consciousness is raised by studying theories of poverty and justice, the historical context in the U.S. and in other countries, and the principle that the personal is political. This heightened consciousness enables students to examine the current meta-messages and so-called reality. The often harsh light shed on what is actually occurring creates a desire to be a catalyst for change. The goal is to link reflection and action (praxis). For example, consider the culture of poverty theory that stresses the immutability of poverty and places blame on low-income people for their plight. Students whose consciousness is raised recognize these myths and are more prepared to assist clients to debunk these assumptions and deal with their internalized oppression. Just as students become aware of the larger picture and take action, similarly a parallel process may occur for clients. Students may then assist clients to associate with or form action groups of like-minded people to channel their awareness and anger into action.

*People power to create change.* Students learn that their clients (and they themselves) can bring about change through collective action. Conventional wisdom says that ordinary people must persuade those with formal decision-making power to make change. However, for progressive change to occur, it may need to come from the bottom up, with ordinary people challenging and resisting the ideas and actions of "leaders." It is empowering to provide examples of people power in the United States and globally so that students do not despair, mistakenly believing that they and their clients are powerless to bring about change. Examples from history and current affairs can help to illustrate this to students (e.g., deposing Marcos in the Philippines, overturning apartheid in South Africa, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act, the civil rights movement, the passage of the Violence against Women Act). A list of local people without formal authority who are making a difference in their own community could be provided to students who would then choose one to interview. From these natural leaders, students could learn what they have done and the length of time it has taken to accomplish their goals.



*Strategizing to democratize power.* Students identify groups in power, the strategies they use to stay in power, and what can be done to redistribute power among the population. The studying of social movements is an excellent way to inform students how to get their ideas on the public agenda, delegitimize existing pronouncements from power-holders, reframe the debate, and persuade the public that alternative ideas are more in line with the best values of the country than are those of the power holders (Moyers, 1990). For example, the “right to work” is a misnomer, obfuscating that it is really about busting unions rather than workers’ rights. Once students can see through deceptions such as this one, they can provide the facts to refute the arguments and compose alternative proposals. The strategy would be to take back the values of security and family well-being that the other side is falsely claiming to uphold and show that their own ideas truly protect workers’ rights.

*Debunking powerlessness.* Students need to believe in their own efficacy in order to bring about social change. Lerner (1986) created the concept of “surplus powerlessness,” to explain people’s feelings and beliefs that they have much less power than they actually have. They act on the basis of that belief and create a self-fulfilling prophecy that no matter what they do, they cannot effect change. For this reason, they believe they should not try. Lerner (1986) states that we learn from a young age and throughout our lives that we need to obey authority and do what we are told to do. If we are idealistic, we risk being chided for naiveté and immaturity. The authority structure is maintained by teaching values of being a team player (i.e., not going outside the standards or group norms), not rocking the boat if you want to be successful, and minding your own business. Students could reflect upon how they have internalized these messages to follow authority and conform to cultural norms. They can do critical self-reflection to determine when such conformity is necessary for their own and the collective well-being and when it is not. They can also reflect the payoffs of powerlessness for themselves (e.g., unaccountability and lack of responsibility for one’s own choices and inaction in the face of injustice). Students could also respond to such questions as, “When have you ever challenged someone in authority who was committing an injustice against someone else?” “How have you ever stood up to people who are making a prejudicial joke?” Alternatively, they

could perform role-plays about how they would respond to an unjust situation.

## Community Encounter

Students need to build relationships with people living in poverty to be comfortable in their presence, appreciate their humanity and multidimensionality, and develop a strong commitment to fight the ravages of poverty. Students need more than knowledge about the structural causes of poverty to make a commitment to work with and for persons living in poverty. They can read about poverty and understand the dynamics of inequality and still unconsciously hold on to myths about those who are poor. Personal encounters, direct exchanges, and hearing the stories of real people struggling to survive help students internalize the injustice of being poor in America and empathize with their plight. We propose a one- to two-week long encounter that orients students to the hardships of people living in poverty. Below are some options for encounters with low-income people.

- Students would go into middle and high school class-rooms in public or charter schools and tell students about the profession of social work. Then they could engage in a dialogue to elicit students' dreams for themselves and their communities, asking such questions as, "What do you want to be or to do when you are older? What would help you to achieve your dream? What might be the barriers? What do you think should be improved in your community and how could that happen? Do you know people in your community who could make these things happen?"
- Go to neighborhood centers and mill about casually seeking out conversations with diverse people and volunteering or participating in activity groups. Students can share what they are studying, why they are in the neighborhood, and their motivations for going into social work. Students need to open up a dialogue and not carry out "interviews."
- Dialogue with homeless persons who are in the library, park, fast-food restaurants, agencies that provide emergency

services, drop-in centers, and/or shelters. Students need to figure out an entry to talk to someone who is homeless, perhaps inviting the person to have a cup of coffee or a meal.

- Contact a neighborhood worker or center director to help organize a story-telling event in a park or other venue. Both students and persons living in poverty could tell a story related to their own lives without passing judgment or asking intrusive questions.
- Go up to a person who is homeless, carrying a sign and strike up a conversation about their sign. Bring a couple of signs and discuss that if you were homeless you would think of carrying these signs. Then ask the homeless person what they think of your signs. If the person appreciates the signs, the student could offer the signs to him/her. This idea is adapted from a documentary in which the filmmaker portrayed this activity (Bogusky, 2012).

## Social Change Projects

Requiring students to do a social change project would allow application of the principles for class activism and fulfillment of EPAS competencies prescribed by CSWE (2015). The proposed social change projects involve more than case advocacy. They require engaging in political practice geared toward removing barriers to human rights and promoting quality of life. They necessitate reflection about the structural roots of problems followed by action to decrease injustice.

Social change projects may take place in field placements, but could also be carried out through masters or honors theses, independent studies, and a sequence of coursework such as research and policy. Below are examples of possible social change projects.

- Develop a poor peoples' conference to raise consciousness about poverty from the experts who live it themselves. Students in tandem with low-income persons, and in collaboration with faculty and possibly field instructors, could institute a conference in which people who live in poverty tell their stories and give their ideas about poverty eradication.

Low-income people are the key presenters to teach social work practitioners, community members, students and faculty about poverty and their visions for change.

- Work with organizations in low-income neighborhoods to show films illustrating neighborhood actions to fight poverty, as a precursor to discussing what community members wish to do for their own locality. Films such as "Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street" can be used as a vehicle to create hope and motivation about the possibilities for social change (Lipman, 1996). Students would work with these neighbors to select which issues to work on and collaboratively implement strategies for change.
- Students could survey low-income residents of a community to discover their strengths, abilities, and those of the local organizations according to "assets-based" community organizing methods (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1990). To gain information and engage neighbors, students would do door-to-door canvassing. The goal would be to put all this information in a "community bank," so that they can match people's needs with the resources and expertise available in the community. This could create and strengthen bonds between members of the community and the institutions located there. Although this self-help organizing might not seem like social action, a stronger community can be more easily mobilized and empowered to act for change.
- Students could survey social workers to determine the unmet needs of their clients. A group of clients with similar needs for services and resources could be invited to come together to discuss their perspectives about unmet needs, barriers and injustices preventing these needs from being met, and visions for themselves and their community. From these student-facilitated discussions, participants' consciousness may be raised about the realities they face and lead them into constructive action to create social change.

*Field Practicum Projects*

Principles of class activism can be applied in field education sites. We must go beyond teaching principles and make sure they are internalized by the students. Students who know the causes and solutions to poverty, but do not implement strategies for change, may end up feeling incapable and powerless. The acquired knowledge and values will not fully prepare them to engage in activism. For this reason, it is unlikely that they will become activists after they graduate. We must provide field placement experiences to students that prepare them to engage in social and political action, consistent with the expectations of the social work code of ethics.

We need to have new models for field placements. Right now many schools are split between direct practice and macro course work and field placements are similarly divided. We propose that both micro and macro concentrations need a macro contextualization of people's issues. This means a critical analysis of power, including social and economic forces that are central to people's problems, e.g., C. Wright Mills' statement that most people's problems are labeled as their "private troubles" rather than "public issues" (Mills, 1959).

Many agencies focus on providing micro-services to individuals, groups and families. Hence, we need to reform field placements so that even micro tracked students spend approximately half of the time in field helping clients see their true power in the social economic context. Field coordinators and faculty liaisons need to prepare field instructors and students to develop the macro change component of field practice. The field coordinator could work with field instructors to encourage them to brainstorm about macro activities that could be helpful to their clients and community. Field liaisons in their seminars should prepare for direct practice students to integrate the micro and macro components of practice. It cannot be assumed that macro students engage in activism in their field practicum or in their employing organizations serving low-income clients. Thus, students need guidance about politicizing practice so they can use their leadership and administrative skills on behalf of clients, rather than maintaining the agency's status quo.

The following are possible field projects that can be incorporated into micro or macro field placements to politicize practice in an effort to create social change. Part of the field projects can be carried out in the classroom and other parts in the internship.

- Engage in community based participatory research. A macro field placement in an advocacy research agency, such as the Michigan League for Public Policy, may focus on a research project conducted by providers and users of services. A research committee of providers and service users could meet regularly to learn about appropriate research methodologies for investigating poverty and about firsthand knowledge of the realities of poverty. Out of these meetings could come strategies of how to study poverty that would combine tough realities with academic knowledge. In such a project undertaken by Jacobson, Pruitt-Chapin and Rugeley (2009) the research committee decided to have two separate focus groups, one with persons living in poverty and another with providers; however, persons living in poverty were the facilitators for both groups. Ideas from each group were shared, resulting in a reconceptualization of poverty, mutual understanding about the barriers that persons living in poverty and service providers confront, and innovative solutions for poverty.
- Students who work in direct service could add a project outside of their direct service responsibilities that may have positive influence on the societal context for their clients (Beasley & Hager, 2014). Students, in tandem with the clients, could develop a creative art project aimed at raising consciousness to counter stereotypical poverty identities, as well as any other stigmatized identities that relate to the clients' reasons for seeking services. This project could involve varied art forms such as theater, art murals, individual art projects, storytelling, or performing music. For example, there could be an exhibition of drawings and the artists or other community members could tell their stories that connect to the art. This art and commentary could reflect their struggles, realities, strengths, and visions of their future and that of the community. To have political impact, the audience would include political leaders at various levels and

journalists from traditional media outlets. The community members and clients could use social media, such as twitter, to give an accounting of the event.

- Direct practice students may offer consciousness-raising groups to clients with the intent to have an action component addressing the issues raised. The nature of the group would be one in which, in addition to doing individual healing, clients' issues would be politicized (Woodward, 2014). They would realize that their individual problems have roots in the larger socioeconomic political system. Ultimately, their awareness would lead them to actions addressing structural forces that oppress them. They could develop a feeling of efficacy and hope by channeling their grief and frustrations into actions to bring about social change.
- Field students could receive special instruction in financial literacy delivered through a community workshop or the university. With this knowledge, they can offer instruction to clients in their practicum. Clients can learn about exploitive business practices such as payday lenders and credit card companies. In addition, they can learn how to open up a savings and checking account, etc. In one study, survivors of domestic violence felt more empowered by such training than they did from receiving welfare benefits (Heitling & Postmus, 2014).
- An advocacy program could be developed in practicum sites so that clients and community residents could learn advocacy skills. This training could be geared toward a specific issue or organization about which community members have concerns. For example, in a low income area, field students could help parents learn to advocate with the school system to be more responsive to their children and the concerns of the parents, and provide an education more equal to what students in higher income neighborhoods receive.

## Conclusion

We need to be aware that inequality is at a highpoint. For this reason, we must raise consciousness about the existing



class struggle. Class blindness disguises this struggle and makes the American dream seem real for everyone. This distorted thinking can influence social workers to collude with the few in power by helping clients cope with the oppressive system rather than working to change it to improve the quality of life for all. The framework presented in this article acknowledges the political nature of social work practice and confronts the powerlessness that students feel in their ability to effect change.

Even though this framework concentrates on students during their social work programs, practitioners may also benefit by augmenting their education in regard to working with low income people and recognizing the need for social workers to engage in political struggle. Continuing education requirements for licensing should require hours of training in understanding poverty, working with low-income populations, and applying social action strategies. This would help change our profession's priorities.

The framework takes seriously the aspirations expressed in the NASW Code of Ethics for social workers to engage in social and political action to remove exploitation and oppression. The knowledge and skills that students receive via the classroom, community encounters, social change projects and field practice will equip them to do this. They will embrace being political actors and direct service providers or administrators as an integral part of their professional identity. Consequently, they will feel empowered to confront injustice because they have already practiced it in their formal education.

## References

- Abram, F. Y., Slosar, J. A. & Walls, R. (2005). Reverse mission: A model for international social work education and transformative intra-national practice. *International Social Work*, 48(2), 161-176.
- Beasley, M. M., & Hager, P. M. (2014). Intervention, instigation, interruption: Art, activism, and social policy. *Journal of Poverty*, 18(1), 1-4.
- Boal, A., & McBride, C. (1979). *Theatre of the oppressed*. New York: Urizen Books.
- Bogusky, A. (Producer), Berger, J., & Laslett, A. (Directors). (2012). *Good Karma \$1: Conversing on Cardboard*. United States. Kids at Play.
- Bricker-Jenkins, M., Gottlieb, N. R., & Hooyman, N. (1991). *Feminist social work practice in clinical settings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Bullock, H. (2004). From the front lines of welfare reform: An analysis of social worker and welfare recipient attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology, 141*(6), 571–588.
- Caldwell, P. (October 8, 2015). Jeb Bush would not reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/10/jeb-bush-voting-rights-act>.
- Clark, S. (2007). Social work students' perceptions of poverty. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 16*(1/2), 149–166.
- Council of Social Work Education (2015). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Retrieved from <https://www.csw.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Standards-and-Policies/2015-EPAS/2015E-PASandGlossary.pdf.aspx>
- Day, P. H., & Schiele, J. (2013). *A new history of social welfare* (7th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- DeWitt, L. (2010). The development of Social Security in America. *Social Security Bulletin, 70*(3), Retrieved from <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v70n3/v70n3p1.html>
- Dominelli, L. (1997). International social development and social work: A feminist perspective. In M. C. Hokenstad and J. Midgley (Eds.), *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* 74–91. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Faver, C., Cavazos, Q., & Trachte, B. (2005). Social work students at the border: religion, culture and beliefs about poverty. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 11*(1), 1–15.
- Fisher, R., & Karger, H. J. (1997). *Social work and community in a private world*. New York: Longman.
- Freire, P. (1968). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Friedrich, C. J. (1949). *The philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's moral and political writing*. New York: Modern Library.
- Gasker, J. A. (2003). Starting where the student is: Adapting social justice curricula to poverty attitudes. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 9*(1), 93–112.
- Gorski, P. C. (Winter/2006). Savage unrealities: Classism and racism abound in Ruby Payne's framework. *Rethinking Schools, 21*(2), 1–7.
- Heitling, A., & Postmus, J. (2014). Financial literacy and economic empowerment of survivors of intimate partner violence: Examining the differences between public assistance recipients and nonrecipients. *Journal of Poverty, 18*(2), 130–149.
- Jacobson, M., Pruitt-Chapin, K., & Rugeley, C. (2009). Toward reconstructing poverty knowledge: Addressing food insecurity through grassroots research design and implementation. *Journal of Poverty, 13*(1), 1–19.
- Jansson, B. (2014). *Becoming an effective policy advocate: From policy practice to social justice* (7th ed.). California: Brooks/Cole.

- Jansson, B. (2017). *Becoming an effective policy advocate: From policy practice to social justice* (8th ed.) California: Brooks/Cole.
- Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. P. (1990). Assets-based community development. *Clinic Review*, 85, 23–29.
- Krumer-Nevo, M., Weiss-Gal, I., & Monnickendam, M. (2009). Poverty-aware social work practice: A conceptual framework for social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 225–243.
- Lehning, A. J., Vu, C. M., & Pintak, I. (2007). Theories of poverty. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 16(1/2), 5–19.
- Lerner, M. (1986). *Surplus powerlessness*. Oakland, CA: The Institute for Labor and Mental Health.
- Limb, G. E., & Organista, K. C., (2006). Change between entry and graduation in MSW student views on social work's traditional mission, career motivations, and practice preferences: Caucasian, student of color, and American Indian group comparisons. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(2), 269–290.
- Lipman, M. (1996). (Producer). *Holding ground: The rebirth of Dudley Street*. United States: New Day Films.
- Midgley, J. (1997). Social work and international social development: Promoting a developmental perspective in the profession. In M. C. Hokenstad and J. Midgley (Eds.), *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* 11–26. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moyer, B. (1990). *The practical strategist: Movement Action Plan (MAP) strategic theories for evaluating, planning and conducting social movements*. San Francisco, CA: Social Movement Empowerment Project.
- Mullaly, B. (2007). *The new structural social work* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- National Association of Social Workers. (1996). *Code of ethics*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Osei-Kofi, N. (2005). Pathologizing the poor: A framework for understanding Ruby Payne's Work. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38, 367–375.
- Payne, R. K. (1995). *A framework for understanding poverty*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Payne, R. K., & Krabill, D. L. (2002). *Hidden rules of class at work*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Pryce, J. (2010). Do Catholic social work programs “prefer” the poor? Results from a content analysis of MSW program syllabi. *Social Work & Christianity*, 37(4), 407–423.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

- Reeser, L. C., & Weinger, S. (November, 2012). *Poverty attributions and solutions of educators and students curriculum and policy implications*. Paper presented at the CSWE APM meeting, Washington, D.C.
- Reisch, M., & Andrews, J. (2002). *The road not taken: A history of radical social work in the United States*. New York: Routledge.
- Robinson, G. (2011). The contradictions of caring: Social workers, teachers, and attributions for poverty and welfare reform. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(10), 2374–2404.
- Staudy, M. (2011). Practitioner biases and child service use disparities: Implications for social work education. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 31(1), 145–162.
- Trattner, W. I. (1989). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press.
- Tropman, J. E. (1989). *American values and social welfare: Cultural contradictions in the welfare state*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Van Gelder, S., & Staff of Yes! Magazine (Eds.). (2011). *Occupy Wall Street and the 99% movement*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Van Wormer, K. (2004). *Confronting oppression, restoring justice: From policy analysis to social action*. Alexandria, Virginia: Council on Social Work Education.
- Weaver, R. D., & Yun, S. H. (2011). Analyzing the attitude of undergraduate students toward poverty and impoverished persons: Does social work education make a difference? *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 31(1), 3–20.
- Woodward, K. (2014). School or therapy: Two approaches to empowering welfare-reliant women. *Journal of Poverty*, 18(4), 399–426.



# International Service-Learning Trips: A Framework for Developing Cross-Cultural Competence

Mioara Diaconu

*Western Michigan University*

Laura Racovita-Szilagyi

*Southern Adventist University*

Aida Neacsu

*Tu Pro, Namibia*

*The International Federation of Social Workers (2017) calls for social work professionals to be empowering agents who understand the context and diversity of their client populations. At the same time, research on evidence-based practice suggests that cultural immersion is one of the best ways for students to develop much-needed cultural competence and appreciation for diversity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). This article proposes that students would benefit more from having the opportunity to get hands-on experience in needs assessments, appreciative inquiry, program designs, implementations, and evaluations of grassroots sustainable development programs than simply being involved in charitable endeavors. Furthermore, it proposes that international exposure through well-crafted international service-learning trips can assist in the development of cross-cultural competence needed to empower individuals and communities to produce social change. International service-learning trips have great potential to help prepare students for successful careers with culturally diverse populations nationally and internationally. The educational model presented in this article stems from best practices developed during several international ser-*

*vice-learning trips and international study tours. Such trips and tours were based on a human rights sustainable development approach and not on a charity model. The article discusses the phases and activities recommended for the development of a successful international service-learning trip and provides recommendations for the pre-, during, and post-trip experiences.*

*Key words: international service-learning, cross-cultural competence, international social work, appreciation for diversity*

## Introduction

Currently, social workers face formidable challenges as they strive to effectively serve racially, culturally and ideologically diverse client populations. Many of these professionals are confronted on a daily basis with situations reflecting the impact of globalization, including human rights violations. Examples of such violations are cases of female genital mutilation and culturally condoned domestic violence (Hokenstad & Midgley, 1997). It is imperative for social workers to develop cross-cultural competence in order to effectively manage these challenging situations. We propose that a higher level of cultural competence may be accomplished by providing students with structured international learning opportunities.

Cultural competence has become an essential principle of social work education and practice in the United States of America. Cultural competence is emphasized in education through the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards developed and implemented by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (2015), and in practice by the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (2008). NASW provides additional resources for students, educators, and practitioners through the Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence (NASW, 2015). Moreover, efforts have been made by various social work programs to provide their students with international exposure opportunities that expand the social work experience beyond the local to the global arena.

Research has identified numerous benefits associated with providing students with international learning opportunities.



These include the development of cultural competence, student expertise, building confidence, promoting self-assessment, enhancing understanding of globalization and global interdependence, increasing interest in human rights and volunteer work, shaping attitudes and vision, and improving critical thinking (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). The previously identified benefits build the knowledge and skills that social workers need to engage in effective practice.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) outlines a comprehensive understanding of the purpose of the social work profession and the role of the social worker in the service delivery process. According to IFSW (2017), social workers are change agents focused on individual and community well-being, who empower local people to promote social change while understanding and appreciating the diversity present in the practice context.

This article presents a cross-cultural competence framework and shows how international exposure through the international service-learning (ISL) trips can contribute to the development of cross-cultural competence while applying a human rights-based approach to sustainable development (IFSW, 2017; Offenheiser & Holcombe, 2003). It also describes the phases and activities associated with the development of successful ISL trips and study tours. The model presented in this article is the result of longitudinal inquiry and observations made during international service-learning trips to Thailand, Namibia and Haiti, and international study tours in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Based on these experiences, the authors propose that ISL trips have great potential to help effectively prepare social work students for international careers and effective practice in culturally diverse contexts.

### *Cross-Cultural Competence*

According to the NASW Code of Ethics, the social worker's ethical responsibility to clients includes the development of cultural competence. Ethical standard 1.05 (b) Cultural Competence and Social Diversity Standard, point (b), reads as follows:

Social workers should have a knowledge base of their client's cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the

provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups. (NASW, 2008, p. 6)

It is important to define cultural competence as understood by the social work profession, given that it is part of the social work value base. Therefore, cultural competence is defined as:

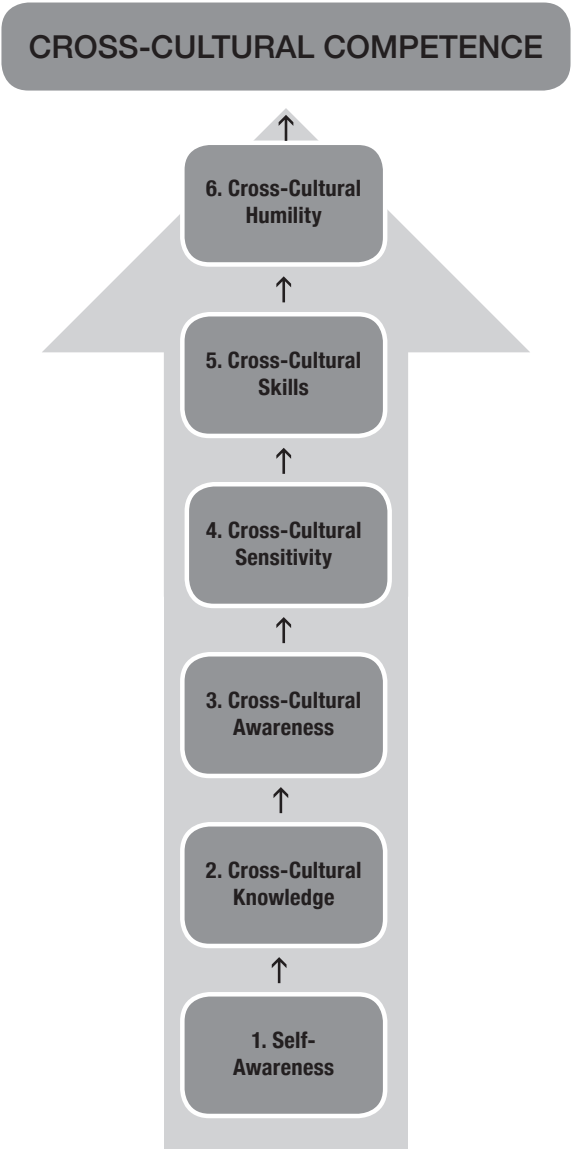
the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all culture, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. (NASW, 2015, p. 13)

Fong (2004), Fong & Furuto (2001), and Lum (2012) concur. According to them, cultural competence is developed through an ongoing process of knowledge acquisition, skill development, and the evaluation of social work practice within the context of professional social work values. Furthermore, cultural competence is necessary to enable individuals to create long-term changes in their contextual communities. Before achieving cultural competence, social work students must take several steps. These steps are presented in the Diaconu's Cultural Competency Framework (Figure 1). The elements of the proposed framework are usually an integral part of successful international learning trips. These include: self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural skills, and cross-cultural humility. This proposed framework should foster cultural growth and cross cultural competence. Grusky (2000) warns that, "without thoughtful preparation, orientation, program development and the encouragement for study, and critical analysis and reflection, the programs can become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstanding and simplistic stereotypes" (p. 858).

### *Steps to Cross-Cultural Competence Development*

The following steps are proposed to help counter personal and societal stereotypes and promote culturally competent practice.

Figure 1. Diaconu’s Cross-Cultural Competence Framework



*Self-Awareness*

Development of cross-cultural competence cannot begin without self-awareness. Competent professionals must have

a working knowledge and appreciation of their own cultural identity, values and biases, as well as an understanding of how power and privilege manifest in their professional lives. This knowledge will help them advocate on behalf of clients and help such clients in their journey to personal and collective well-being (NASW, 2015).

### *Cross-Cultural Knowledge*

The second step proposed in this model is the increase of cross-cultural knowledge. This step requires individuals to develop a personal knowledge base that includes the cultural characteristics, family systems, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and the history of other ethnic groups (Adams, 1995). This knowledge base can include "race and ethnicity; immigration and refugee status; tribal groups; religion and spirituality; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression, social class; and mental or physical abilities of various cultural groups" (NASW, 2015, p. 4). Students should gain cross-cultural knowledge on a daily basis through independent learning, individual interactions with people from other ethnic groups, and through the explicit and implicit curricula of their social work educational programs.

### *Cross-Cultural Awareness*

The proposed third step to the development of cultural cross-competence is building cross-cultural awareness. This step may require a paradigm shift for the understanding of the personal attitudes and values of other ethnic groups. It also requires increased understanding, acceptance, and openness in our relation to others (Adams, 1995). The concept of cross-cultural awareness is built on self-awareness and cross-cultural knowledge.

### *Cross-Cultural Sensitivity*

The proposed fourth step to cross-cultural competence is developing cultural sensitivity. This step builds on the three previous steps and asserts that no culture is better than another, in spite of cultural differences or similarities. Therefore, we should not assign intrinsic value to observed cultural differences. At

this stage, students should be able to see how cross-cultural sensitivity can positively influence the outcomes of the helping process.

### *Cross-Cultural Skills*

The proposed fifth step to cross-cultural competence is the development of cross-cultural skills. Social work practitioners are professionally mandated to understand and respect the role that culture plays in the psychosocial development of individuals and their families. Furthermore, through the knowledge building process that it is based on evidence-based practice, social workers should develop the necessary skills to competently assist their clients (NASW, 2015). The cross-cultural skills employed by social workers, as agents of social change, should build on the cultural knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity developed in the previous steps. These skills include the ability to:

- Successfully manage constant change
- Be sensitive to the cultural needs of others
- Successfully navigate a multi-cultural work and volunteer environment
- Adapt to time delays while still focused on the task-at-hand and deadlines
- Keep an open mind to environments displaying diverse values, norms, and cultural mores, and,
- Thrive in cross-cultural settings (NASW, 2015).

### *Cross-Cultural Humility*

The sixth and the final proposed step to cross-cultural competence is the development of cross-cultural humility. This requires making “a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to readdressing the power imbalances (...) and to developing mutually beneficial and nonpaternalistic clinical and advocacy partnerships with communities on

behalf of individuals and defined populations" (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 117).

Cross-cultural humility requires an understanding and appreciation of one's own culture in a harmonious relationship with other cultures that promotes a selfless desire for social justice for the benefit of all (Rawls, 1971). Cultural humility also recognizes the central expertise of the client and the worker's recognition of his/her lack of knowledge of someone else's culture needed to make value judgments (Hohman, 2013; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013). During international service-learning trips, students are expected to approach the client situation with respect, humility, and a personal awareness of their own limitations. It can be argued that true collaboration and client empowerment happens only when allowing the client to be the true expert of his own cultural reality. Without cultural humility, international service-learning trips will not be able to promote true cultural competence.

The cross-cultural competence model presented in this article does not suggest that an outsider can become an expert on someone else's culture by following the proposed steps. Instead, it proposes that the model can help significantly increase one's level of cross-cultural competence. The levels of cultural competence that can be attained through the implementation of this model are: (a) pre-competence—the understanding that there is still work to be done; (b) competence—the comprehension that there is a need for continual personal assessment of knowledge and attitudes; and (c) proficiency—the readiness to contribute to the knowledge base. (Adams, 1995; Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989).

## Student International Exposure

In a context of globalization and increased population movement across national geographical boundaries, helping professionals are becoming increasingly aware that they must attain excellence in cultural competence (Harper-Dorton & Lantz, 2007, p. xi). Cultural immersion is considered one of the best ways for social work students to develop cultural sensitivity and the appreciation of other cultures necessary to fulfill the profession's purpose in the 21st century (Anderson et al., 2006; Pence & McGilivray, 2008). Additional benefits of cultural immersion include:

building student confidence; promoting self-assessment; increasing understanding of globalization and global interdependence; increasing interest in humanitarian efforts and volunteer work; shaping attitudes and vision; improving critical thinking; and helping students understand and appreciate their own culture (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Furthermore, travel abroad also contributes to the development of students' cognitive and affective functioning (Wolfer, 1990). As a result, an increasing number of academic disciplines and professions are relying on international travel to help their students build cross-cultural competence.

There are numerous ways of providing cultural immersion experiences. These include international study tours, international internships, study abroad programs, summer semesters abroad, and service-learning trips. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 college students in the United States participate in some form of international experience each year (Sachau, Brasher, & Fee, 2010). International field placements and semesters abroad provide students with more time for cultural immersion and skills development. Barriers preventing many students from participating in international educational experiences include lack of time, family or personal issues, financial burdens or responsibilities, academic needs and/or school-mandated course sequencing (Nagy & Falk, 2000). Content-driven study tours provide another option for cultural immersion. These are considered fairly limiting in their nature and scope, and may be perceived as more "touristy" and narrow in content. In our view, international service-learning (ISL) trips are the preferred choice to provide students with significant cultural immersion experiences, given their relative short-term and applied nature.

## International Service-Learning Trips

International service-learning (ISL) trips are faculty-led, relatively short-term, overseas intensive trips. From the authors' perspective, ISL trips work best when they last from three to eight weeks. These trips enable us to expose students to a broad range of cultures, social contexts and geographic locations while maintaining a focus on organized service. ISL trips are organized in partnership with local organizations and are fully embedded in their local contexts. Service activities are designed



to address specific local community or institutional needs, with a strong emphasis on empowerment consistent with a human rights and sustainable development approach (Offenheiser & Holcombe, 2003). This type of international exposure provides students with opportunities for cultural immersion, hands-on involvement, agency or community support and cooperation, and personal and professional reflection (Anderson et al., 2006; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). In contrast to study tours, ISL trips lead to academic credit and are focused primarily on service learning. For this reason, learning must be documented before academic credit can be awarded to students. The rigorous learning objectives and expectations attached to the ISL trips (e.g., course content informed service) make this type of international experience empowering and developmental in nature. The ISL developmental nature sharply contrast with the charitable model of volunteer tourism or volunteerism.

### *Charity versus Human Rights Approach to Social Development*

Clear and measurable learning outcomes are key to ISL trips. Learning experiences must seek an understanding of local realities to enable students to go beyond charity and realize the need to empower individuals, groups, or communities to create and implement needed changes. This focus is crucial to the proposed cross-cultural learning experience. The charitable model approach relies mostly on volunteerism. It sees local problems as requiring outside expert assistance provided by moral individuals, who sacrifice their time, efforts, and finances to provide assistance to people in need (Boesen & Martin, 2007). The charitable model requires the development of partnerships between helpers and clients to follow a series of expert recommended or mandated activities to solve problems. In spite of the merits of this approach, experts recognize the value of the local client or community knowledge base in the pursuit of sustainable change. As a result, a new model of development was proposed during the last decade. As part of the movement away from the charity model, experts looked at sustainability as an important aspect of development. The resulting model does not see clients as victims. Cultural humility plays a prominent role in this model, given that it sees the client as an expert that simply needs to learn different skills to solve his/her problems. The

model proposes that our inalienable human rights must be the basis for a true understanding of human problems and their solutions, regardless of the context (Boesen & Martin, 2007; EQUITAS, 2014). For these reasons, successful international service-learning trips rely on a human rights and sustainable development approach.

### *Phases of Successful International Service-Learning Trips*

We propose the following phases and activities of successful ISL trips based on experiences of the main author during several ISL trips and international study tours.

**Pre-travel phase.** Some of the pre-travel activities required for the development of successful ISL trips include: (1) *Thematic Identification*—On what population and/or issue will the trip service activities focus? (2) *Geographical Location Identification*—Where does the population of interest reside or where is the problem taking place (e.g. continent, country, region within a country, city/village)? (3) *Security Assessment*—Is the identified destination safe for students and faculty to live and work in? An important planning component is the on-going monitoring of the site [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for up-to-date international travel alerts and warnings. (4) *In-country Partner Identification*—What community, institution, organization, or agency would be the best partner/s to accomplish the goals of the ISL trip? Universities and colleges could partner with entities such as: local governmental or nongovernmental organizations engaged in community development work, local governmental or nongovernmental human service agencies, national-level not-for-profit voluntary agencies (e.g., World Vision, Save the Children, Catholic Relief, CARE, ADRA), U.S.-based organizations in foreign countries (e.g., Peace Corps), U.S. governmental organizations (e.g., United States Agency for International Development), and other international organizations (e.g., the UN organizations). (5) *Collaboration/Reciprocity Agreement/s*—Are there agreements already in place between the college/university and the in-country partner containing clear guidelines, expectations, and responsibilities (e.g., MOUs, partnership agreements)? If not, these documents need to be drafted and signed by all parties involved before the trip begins. The home institution's legal team should take a close look at these documents before signing them. (6) *Program*

*Development*—What programs/projects and/or service-learning activities would be required for completion of the course? This must be decided in close collaboration with the in-country partner entity while following a human rights-based, sustainable development model. (7) *Curriculum Development*—What will be the academic content and theoretical framework of the proposed course? What will be the in-country service-learning activities? What competencies and practice behaviors will be covered in the course? (8) *Trip Schedule and Itinerary Development*—Given its relatively short-term nature, what would be the best time for the ISL trip to take place (e.g., winter, spring, or summer break)? What would be the optimal timeframe for the trip (a minimum of three weeks; a maximum of eight weeks)? We should prepare for unexpected circumstances and contingencies when developing the itinerary for the ISL trip by developing a Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, and so on.

The pre-travel phase should also include: (9) *Enrollment Targets*—This is determined by contextual issues, the trip's characteristics and the project's capacity. (e.g., housing capacity, available transportation, and number of leading faculty). (10) *Budget Development*—work with the in-country partner on identifying in-country vendors and best prices for international and local airfare prices; in-country room and board; in-country transportation, etc. (11) *Faculty Expertise*—Does the principal faculty leader have the necessary expertise to lead the trip, including knowledge of the academic content, travel abroad experience, and any necessary language proficiency? If elements of the required expertise are missing, the leading faculty member can either partner with another faculty member, identify an in-country expert/consultant who could complement his/her expertise, or fill any knowledge gaps before the trip takes place. (12) *Institutional Procedures*—Make sure the trip takes place in accordance with the home-institution's policies and procedures. Investigate and follow all institutional guidelines applicable to ISL trips (e.g., prepare and submit needed applications and other required documents). This includes following all institutional risk management guidelines. (13) *Student Recruitment*—Identify and disseminate the participants' inclusion and exclusion criteria (e.g., age, degree or area of specialized study, academic level). Identify the most appropriate marketing

strategies to reach the targeted population (e.g., social media, posters, flyers, emails, advising meetings). (14) *Informal Student Orientation*—Meet with interested students to clarify the trip's purpose, goals, and expectations; go over the trip's schedule and financial information; and provide them with information regarding course registration.

The final steps in the pre-travel phase include: (15) *Finalize ISL Trip Logistics*—Upon students' registration, purchase airfare tickets, pay for the hotel reservations (in many countries, hotels require pre-payment for the reserved rooms), purchase international travel insurance for all participants, etc. (16) *Formal Student Preparation*—Before departing, registered students should participate in a series of face-to-face seminars, presentations, and/or lectures. The lead faculty member should meet with students as often as necessary, depending on the nature and time-frame of the trip. Options include weekly meetings for an entire semester before the trip, or daily face-to-face interactions for ten to fourteen days before departure. Topics to be addressed must include, but are not limited to: local history, language, regional and local cultural mores and practices, in-country organizational norms, body language and verbal cues, dress code, regional and local idioms, flexibility and adaptability, non-judgmental attitudes (do's and don'ts), confidentiality, and in-country safety and security tips. Students may be required to read recommended books and articles and to view video materials.

During pre-departure meetings, whenever possible natives of the proposed host country should be invited to share personal experiences and to answer students' questions. The lead faculty member may consider the use of a cross-cultural self-awareness instrument. Test results should be processed and discussed with students. Lastly, a directed written assignment should be submitted before departure. The assignment should focus on the content covered during the pre-travel face-to-face interactions and on students' trip expectations. Assignments should revolve around the first three steps of the cross-cultural competence framework (Figure 1): self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, and cross-cultural awareness. Assignments should have clear descriptions, expectations, and grading rubrics. The last step in the pre-departure preparations is (18) *State Department Registration*—Register the ISL trip participants with

the State Department and with the US Embassy/Consulate in the host country.

*In-country phase.* The activities suggested during this phase include, but are not limited to: (1) *Safety and Security*—Immediately upon arrival, the ISL trip leader should get in touch with the United States Embassy/Consulate in that country and introduce the group to the local authorities and other leaders, when appropriate. At all times, the participants should be aware of their immediate physical surroundings, they should keep an eye on the political developments in the host country, and they should adopt neutral views on national, regional, ethnic, organizational, local, or personal disputes. (2) *In-Country Logistic Auditing*—Upon arrival, the ISL trip leader should contact the partnering entities and all the vendors providing services, such as transportation providers, to make sure that these vendors are still in business, that the contracted services are still available, and that the prices for services and goods did not change (potentially due to higher gas prices, higher national or local inflation, etc.). (3) *Cultural Information Review*—Before starting the service-learning activities, a native facilitator from the in-country partnering entity or a cultural anthropologist from the local university/college should be invited to provide a review of the cultural information presented during the pre-travel phase, and to further clarify any remaining ambiguities and misconceptions. (4) *Service-learning Activities*—These are primarily the hands-on activities designed to encourage students to “work with local organizations to serve the community where they are staying, engage in cultural exchange, and learn about a daily reality very different from their own” (Grusky, 2000, p. 859). (5) *Tourist Activities*—In addition to the service-learning activities, evening and/or weekend tourist activities should be integrated into the ISL trip’s schedule. These activities should offer opportunities for learning about regional or local cultural mores, provide morale boosters, serve as opportunities for relaxing and decompressing. (6) *Informational and Devotional Meetings*—Every morning an informational meeting should take place in order to clarify the daily tasks and expectations, changes in schedule, etc. A short devotional could take place either before or after the informational meeting if the group is composed of faith-based social work students. (7) *Debriefings*—At the end of each

workday, faculty members and students should meet to discuss the activities of the day; share thoughts, feelings and personal experiences; and explore the highs and lows of the day. These moments of debriefing should further clarify the purpose of the trip, solidify the learning objectives, and help cement cultural competence principles among students. (8) *Monitoring and Evaluation*—All in-country activities should be monitored and evaluated on a consistent basis by the ISL trip leader. This will allow for timely interventions when issues arise or when circumstances change. (9) *Feedback and Guidance*—Feedback and guidance should be provided to the students and to the in-country partner entities on a consistent basis or as needed.

The activities presented in the in-country phase are divided in three major categories: (1) *Investigative*—During the service-learning trip, students are expected to engage in investigative activities that enable them to study the course topics or issues (e.g., experiential research activities and papers, agency/community presentations). (2) *Applied*—Students are expected to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to real life situations. (3) *Reflective*—Students are expected to engage in reflective activities such as debriefing and personal journaling at the end of each day.

During the in-country phase, students should focus on the last two steps of the proposed cross-cultural competence model (Figure 1): the development and application of cross-cultural skills and cultural humility.

*Post-travel phase.* Post-trip activities include, but may not be limited to: (1) *Critical Assessment and Analysis*—Upon their return, students should be provided with face-to-face interaction/s, written assignments, and/or video diaries to help them synthesize and analyze the acquired knowledge. (2) *Practical Applications*—Students should identify applications and implications of their learning. More specifically, they should reflect on the relevant applications of the acquired knowledge for their professional skills. They should also identify key applications of their learning for the classroom, their degree programs, internships, communities, and/or work settings.

The presented ISL trip stages and activities are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather they reflect the personal observations and experience gained after years of organizing international



service-learning trips and study tours. The stages and activities presented in this article should be adapted to fit the unique needs and contexts of each individual ISL trip.

## Conclusion

According to Nagy and Falk (2000), the global village in which we now live and global interdependence are growing by leaps and bounds. Stein (1965) stated half a century ago that “we neglect our responsibility in social work education when we do not provide a world view to our students, and we neglect our responsibility to our profession and our government when we do not contribute to international service” (p. 55). If these words were true more than fifty years ago, they are even more important for educators and practitioners today, given the shift from charity to a human rights and sustainable development approach (Offenheiser & Holcombe, 2003). In conclusion, ISL trips help students and faculty members see social work in action through empowerment and sustainable social change. These trips also give them the opportunity to contextualize social work practice. Benefits associated with ISL trips include development of cross-cultural competence, learning about global issues, international exposure, the opportunity to apply internationally acquired knowledge to domestic, cultural, social, and political issues, and the opportunity to contribute our own professional experiences and expertise to global issues (Healy, 1990). Schools of social work are encouraged to infuse international content into their curricula and to support international service-learning trips, organized content-driven study tours, international field placements and study abroad experiences. The authors consider international service-learning (ISL) trips to be the most comprehensive of all these. These trips create an intricate canvas where students can apply academic knowledge and theoretical concepts to community service projects with the dual purpose of learning and helping others (Crabtree, 2008).

## References

- Adams, D. L. (1995). (Ed.). *Health issues for women of color: A cultural diversity perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.



- Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R. J., & Hubbard, A. C. (2006). Short-term study aboard and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30, 467–469
- Boesen, J. K., & Martin, T. (2007). Applying a rights-based approach: An inspirational guide for civil society. *The Danish Institute for Human Rights*. Retrieved from [https://www.crin.org/en/docs/dihr\\_rba.pdf](https://www.crin.org/en/docs/dihr_rba.pdf)
- Chieffo, L., & Griffiths, L. (2004). Large-scale assessment of student attitudes after a short-term study abroad program. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 165–177.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2015). *Educational policy and accreditation standards*. Retrieved from [https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Accreditation-Process/2015-EPAS/2015EPAS\\_Web\\_FINAL.pdf.aspx](https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/Accreditation/Accreditation-Process/2015-EPAS/2015EPAS_Web_FINAL.pdf.aspx)
- Crabtree, R. D. (2008). Theoretical foundations for international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 15,(1), 18–36., 18–36.
- Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Issacs, M. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*, Vol. I. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.
- EQUITAS International Centre for Human Rights Education. (2014). *2014 international human rights training program program information*. Retrieved from <https://equitas.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2014-IH RTP-Information-Package.pdf>
- Fong, R. (2004). *Culturally competent practice with immigrant and refugee children and families*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Fong, R., & Furuto, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Culturally competent practice: Skills, interventions, and evaluations*. Needham Heights, MA: Pearson.
- Grusky, S. (2000). International service learning. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(5), 858–867.
- Harper-Dorton, K. V., & Lantz, J. E. (2007). *Cross-cultural social work practice: Purpose and meaning* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.
- Healy, L. M. (1990). International curriculum content: The challenge of relevance for social work. In K. Kendall (Ed.), *The international in American education*. (p. 17–23). New York, NY: Hunter College of Social Work. Proceedings of an International Symposium.
- Hohman, M. (2013). Cultural humility: A lifelong practice. *In Situ*. Retrieved from: <http://socialwork.sdsu.edu/insitu/diversity/cultural-humilitylifelongpractice/>
- Hokenstad, M. C., & Midgley, J. (1997). Realities of global interdependence: Challenges for social work in a new century. In M. C. Hokenstad & J. Midgley, *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* (pp. 1–10). Washington, DC: NASW Press.

- Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., Worthington Jr., E. L., & Utsey, S. O. (2013). Cultural humility: Measuring openness to culturally diverse clients. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. doi:10.1037/a0032595
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2017). *Global definition of social work*. Retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>
- Lum, D. (Ed.). (2012). *Culturally competent practice: A framework for understanding diverse groups and justice issues* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Nagy, G., & Falk, D. (2000). Dilemmas in international and cross cultural social work education. *International Social Work*, 43(1), 49–60.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2008). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2015). *Standards and indicators for cultural competence in social work practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/>
- Offenheiser, R. C., & Holcombe, S. H. (2003). Challenges and opportunities in implementing a rights-based approach to development: An Oxfam America perspective. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 32(2), 268–301. doi: 10.1177/0899764003032002006
- Pence, H. M., & Macgillivray, I. K. (2008). The impact of an international field experience on preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 14–25.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sachau, D., Brasher, N., & Fee, S. (2010). Three models for short-term study abroad. *Journal of Management Education*, 34(5), 645–670.
- Stein, H. (1965). International responsibilities of US social work education (pp. 41–55). In Conference on International Social Welfare Manpower, *Proceedings of the Conference*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
- Sutton, R. C., & Rubin, D. L. (2004). The GLOSSARI project: Initial findings from a system-wide research initiative on study abroad learning outcomes. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 65–82.
- Tervalon, M., & Murray-Garcia, J. (1998). Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9(2), 117–125.
- Wolfer, G. (1990). *The relationship of globalmindedness to public schools' travel and living abroad experiences*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Arkansas.

# Knowledge Transfer for Full Citizenship: The Educational Model of Innovation in Social Work

Francisco Javier García-Castilla  
Eloy Vírseda

*National University for Distance Education, Spain*

*Knowledge is the central axis of human experience, especially in view of the current culture of information and knowledge in a highly interfaced and technical globalized world. Increased access to information and knowledge are essential prerequisites for the development of all aspects of modern societies. Teaching and research are two of the main functions of modern universities. As a result, two of their fundamental pillars are the creation and transfer of knowledge. Such transfer of knowledge, in turn, requires maintaining effective channels of communication with the public and private sectors of the labor market. Social workers are encouraged to maintain and improve such channels of communication and knowledge transfer in academia and in professional practice. Due to the peculiarities of our profession, a dual strategy for enhancing such communication is proposed. First, universities need to generate useful knowledge to eliminate or ameliorate social problems. Second, research implications for social work practice must be assessed and systematized before they can be disseminated. To this end, this article presents and describes various academic and professional experiences and proposes a model for educational transfer and innovation in social work.*

*Keywords: social work, knowledge transfer, research, practice systematization, educational model.*

## Introduction

Social work as a profession intervenes with the person by creating a helping relationship within a psychosocial perspective. Furthermore, the profession facilitates access to the social rights of citizens. It facilitates access to resources and social benefits by guaranteeing compliance with the law and international agreements. At the same time, social workers are immersed in vertiginous changes within the context of a fluid society and a globalized world. In this context, the rapid rate of change generates new citizen demands for universities and our profession. As agents for social change, social workers are inevitably involved in these social transformations (García-Castilla y Vírveda, 2016a).

It is of vital importance to study the dynamic interaction between people and their social needs. More specifically, we must link academic research initiatives to social problems and human needs in order to generate innovative solutions to benefit society and our profession.

The discipline of social work cannot be oblivious to the new demands society imposes on universities. For years the basic assumptions related to university functioning have been challenged, making a third university function necessary; that is to play a significantly active role in the process of social innovation. Knowledge transfer requires more than sharing outstanding ideas; it also requires that universities serve as guarantors of such process of innovation (Palma, 2012).

It is time for universities to seriously ponder and innovate their curricula, by adding social academic, professional and technological competencies. Universities should rethink professional practices, and re-analyze the social reality. We must engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research. Nevertheless, the research endeavor is not without challenges. López (2012) has identified three 21st century challenges impacting our profession, science and citizenship. These are: strengthening the scientific endeavor in academia to develop new intervention protocols, promoting community social work as an intervention, and taking vulnerable groups into consideration.

Knowledge and technology transfer require a permanent dialogue between practice, teaching and research, and a multidirectional network that facilitates the dynamic exchange of *avant*

*garde* information. Such network and dialogue should result in up-to-date knowledge for teachers, better training for students, and the creation of spaces for reflection on the social reality and professional practice. All of these would benefit the profession given new realities and issues. As Galindo, Sanz, and de Benito (2011, p. 116) stated, "knowledge transfer has emerged to lead the process of technology transformation, to convert the know-how, the knowledge and the skills into products and innovative services in the market."

In the present context, organizations and universities managing the transmission of knowledge must undergo significant change. It is the responsibility of the university to share knowledge with its surroundings. Sharing knowledge with the academic surroundings is the responsibility of the university. According to Galindo et al. (2011, p. 114) universities must generate, apply, use and exploit "technology and knowledge outside the academic environment through interaction with the rest of society." However, universities should not be the only players in this process. All other organizations must generate value through knowledge transfer.

This article describes the processes of knowledge transfer and innovation in social work. It presents situations born within the context of globalization and a society that is driven by information and knowledge. It also identifies issues that originate from the interaction of social work education (adaptation of curricula, academic professional and technological competencies) and university policies related to knowledge transfer, the profession and society (Arias & Aristizábal, 2011). Finally, the article proposes an educational model of knowledge transfer for innovation in social work.

## Knowledge Transfer at the University: The Concept of Knowledge Transfer

Social work should not focus only on managing or distributing resources or benefits; it also needs to contribute to the enjoyment of social rights and the formulation of public policies in a way that leads to full citizenship. As the profession works towards this ideal, it cannot be oblivious to the third role of the university. The transfer of knowledge should contribute to

improve the quality of care and the well-being of society. This can be attained by research and development-driven synergies between the university, social institutions and other agents responsible for social innovation.

What is knowledge transfer? According to Beraza and Rodríguez (2009), it is a way to create value through research efforts. It activates and strengthens the innovating ability of surrounding enterprises, therefore contributing to economic growth and to social welfare. Knowledge transfer should be a dynamic process that brings together the university and social institutions to generate knowledge through social research. Such research analyzes best practices, aimed at optimizing quality of care by social workers (social services, third sector, consultants). The main objective of knowledge transfer in social work is to improve individual care and collective welfare to enhance citizens' access to social rights (García-Castilla y Vírveda, 2016a; IFSW, 2004; López, 2012).

It would be advisable for social workers to develop a type of *social jurisprudence* to learn how to solve cases through their professional practice, generate resources for intervention and provide information that promotes research and innovation in universities. According to Zárraga (2009), a *backroom of social research* must be created to integrate academic and professional practice. The process of knowledge transfer is expected to go beyond the university and the organization and have an ultimate impact on society. The transfer of knowledge should help people enjoy full citizenship

## Adaptation to European Higher Education

The decade of 2000 began to reshape European Higher Education. The European Higher Education Agency was created to initiate educational reform, including: standardizing and validating qualifications and skills; establishing a schedule of grade levels, masters and doctorates; reorienting teaching methodology in learning; and encouraging more practice and applicability (De la Fuente, 2014).

This restructuring of the processes and goals of higher education is taking place within the context of globalization and the internationalization of higher education. In recent decades,

we have witnessed a more prominent role for higher education in “the agenda of international organizations and national governments, higher education institutions and their representative bodies, student organizations and accreditation agencies” (De Wit, 2011, p. 77). Consistent with this, UNESCO has emphasized the international context of higher education. Given this requirement to internationalize its curricula (De Wit, 2011; Guerrero & Urbano, 2012), each university follows its own strategies and policies (global, multicultural, mobility of teachers and students, use and development of technology, creation of enterprises and international institutes, periodic publications). And all this takes place in a context in which the State is increasingly reducing public funding for the support of universities (Kindelán, 2013). In this context, the survival of public or private universities is dependent on its internationalization and the establishment of opportunities to collaborate with other universities in the promotion of its teaching-learning process and knowledge transfer (Barro, 2015).

The international dimension in higher education revolves around politics, the economy, society, culture and academia (De Wit, 2002). The role of universities within the context of globalization is to facilitate the flow of technology, knowledge, people, values and ideas that affect each country in particular ways. These flows are expected to stimulate rational economies (Knight, 2008).

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Lisbon Strategy of 2009 highlighted two dynamics of internationalization that must coexist: competition and cooperation (De Wit, 2011). Competition in the teaching-learning process results from the transmitted knowledge, training and values of students. Nevertheless, academia pushes teachers, students and technical staff to the same international sphere. That is, all the actors in the academic community have gone from a personal competition at the national level to an international competition where research and its dissemination remain central.



## The Teaching-Research Debate in European Higher Education

The processes of internationalization and adaptation in European Higher Education are not exempt from debates or risks. Twenty-first century universities must be guarantors of the teaching-research endeavor in spite of economic pressures (Kindelan, 2013) and/or competing dynamics and social values. Universities should be more than mere transmitters of knowledge. They should also be protagonists in the process of dissemination and innovation. This will inevitably require partnerships with the business world (Gibbons et al., 1994).

One of the changes in the teaching-learning model is that it now requires students to actively participate in their education and be responsible for it. In this model, the teacher's role is to share his knowledge and become a guide in the learning process. Students must learn from many sources in their efforts to develop academic and international competencies. They must actively participate in their acquisition of knowledge and development of skills, abilities and attitudes while aiming at specific learning outcomes. To this end, the university should offer more flexibility in the teaching-learning process. Teaching strategies should focus on the curricula as well as on teaching methods (Kindelan, 2013).

## Social Work in Knowledge Transfer: European Higher Education and Social Work

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has developed the "Global Qualification Standards and Training in Social Work" (Sewal & Jones, 2007). These represent universal propositions for the development of universal social work studies that take into account different cultures as well as the peculiarities of many countries (De Wit, 2011).

A "white book" for the social work degree was created (Vázquez, 2004) and the book, as well as the *Criteria for Designing Curricula Undergraduate Degrees in Social Work* (2007) were launched. Their aim was to promote social work curricula at different universities that revolve around generic and specialized

skills, that require the use of learning activities, and that are learning outcomes oriented.

It is necessary to modify and adapt teaching materials as part of the process of curricular evaluation to respond to emerging knowledge and competency demands. This is necessary to properly equip social workers to respond to the demands of the workplace. This should be seen as an opportunity to include the competencies of universal accessibility and design into professional practice, teaching and research (De la Fuente, 2014). Furthermore, we should also take advantage of this opportunity to introduce digital skills and technology to support social workers in their efforts to respond to adverse social realities (García-Castilla y Vírseda, 2016b).

Adapting social work curricula to satisfy the new requirements of the IFSW has required greater flexibility. This has allowed institutions to identify and rely on “best practices” and focus on learning outcomes (García-Castilla y Vírseda, 2016a).

Social work competencies must clearly integrate knowledge, values and skills. The focus on the development of competencies for practice is consistent with the applied nature of our discipline and our professional models of social action (reflection-action). Since its inception, social work knowledge has stemmed from a constant interaction between applied social research, teaching, and professional practice with different populations, problems and settings (Goyette y Lessard-Herbet, 1988). Our profession has also sought to increase our professional body of knowledge through interdisciplinary research (Juan, Morata, Morante, Trujillo, & Raya, 2013).

The goals of social work education must include, but not be limited to, the transfer of knowledge to students, who in turn will impact society through their practice and their research. As part of an exchange model, the social worker must promote a participatory process that highlights choices and shared decision-making. This approach would be a logical outcome of the values of our profession and from the so-called University Social Responsibility (USR) (Domínguez, 2009).

## Learning Experiences and Actions in Social Work

This section highlights findings of social work research and evaluations as well as other experiences-related knowledge

transfer. The European Higher Education Agency (EHEA) consistently applies standards to measure the quality and prestige of a discipline. One of the most frequently used indicators is the level of scholarly productivity and dissemination (Kindelán, 2012). In addition to scholarship, social work promotes innovation through the establishment of educational teaching models that rely on technology and experiences of cooperation. All of these actions are intended to improve the welfare of citizens. In the following, we identify the strategies that knowledge transfer relies on in its pursuit of social transformations.

### *Evaluation of scholarly productivity*

Social work and social services must adapt to new systems for measuring scholarly productivity if they wish to increase their academic prestige and standing within the university. Martínez, Diaz, Lima, Herrera, and Herrera (2014) conducted an evaluation of social work's scholarly productivity. They provided a bibliometric analysis of international research produced by Spanish researchers and academicians. They reviewed social work publications indexed in Journal Citation Reports-2011 (JCR). They found that 152 papers were published in international journals indexed in JCR. This shows a weakness in international publications. However, the trend is gradually changing. There are approximately 1,000 citations of publications highlighting relative impact and 17 highlighting high impact. The limited number of publications in the area of social work and social services is due in part to the small number of available social work journals. This, however, should not prevent an increase in publications given that there are other journals in JCR with affinity to social work.

### *Academic Social Responsibility*

Academia must encourage and lead the process of knowledge transfer in response to social demands. Research in social work and social services must seek to reverse or counter the dynamics that create poverty or increase social inequalities. Marín, Valarezo, and Sarango (2014), in collaboration with a network of Latin American Universities, identify knowledge transfer as a way to help reduce extreme poverty through a protocol consistent with Academic Social Responsibility practices.

*Interactive concept maps as learning resources in academia*

The use of technology in the teaching-learning process can facilitate the active participation of students in building their own knowledge. Cabero, Ballesteros and López (2015) conducted a study in two Andalusian universities to explore the usefulness of interactive concept maps as a teaching resource. They analyzed the possibilities and limitations of this tool for the professional and academic development of educators and social workers. Study findings highlight the need to improve the training of teachers for the management of Interactive Concept Maps, as well as acknowledge that new pedagogical methodologies are needed for learning and teaching about ethics.

*Massive online open courses (MOOC)*

This is a new university learning platform based on information and communication technologies (ICT). It is considered “a revolution with great potential in the world of education” (Vázquez-Cano & López, 2014, p. 3). This methodology differs from e-learning in the areas of cost and access. It calls for new educational spaces to facilitate the continuing education of social worker educators. It seeks to enable them to acquire digital skills and apply these to their curricula (García-Castilla y Vírveda, 2016b). This creates new possibilities for scientific publication, the design of teaching and training methods, and the creation of bi-directionality in learning from the discipline to the profession, or from the profession to the University.

*Technology for social inclusion*

The advent of technology has improved people’s quality of life. More specifically, we refer to online technology guided by social welfare criteria to help shape socio-economic systems, social justice, income distribution, and inclusion (Juárez & Avelaneda, 2011). Challenges and possibilities associated with this type of technology include: access to quality information as a social right; the use of more advanced and interconnected social software; the use of technology and telecare devices to reduce isolation and loneliness among the elderly, as well as enhanced monitoring and care; the use of mobile telephone applications to locate persons; and home devices and the use of robotics.

*New intervention spaces*

Developments in technology are creating opportunities for social workers. New social work interventions must stem from a flexible and innovative vision. Social workers must develop new and effective channels of communication between teachers and researchers within the university and the community at large. The value of enhanced communication is exemplified by the community social work specialization. Community social work values and promotes mutual aid, solidarity, social justice, rights, and resources (López, 2012). The previously mentioned values also support the advancement of technology and the use of social networks, which in turn generate new forms of communication and spaces of intervention and cooperation. The goal is to *turn the community into an action subject* beyond social work's ability to promote its self-sufficiency. Social networks are already playing an important role in community social work.

A study conducted by Rodríguez (2016) analyzed a training intervention in a social network. The study relied on semi-structured interviews with social workers from different municipalities of the Community of Madrid that comprises over one hundred thousand inhabitants. Significant study findings include that community social work at the local level needs new strength-based approaches to build the capacity of social networks and mobilize resources toward positive change. Social networks represent a new way to communicate. Social work must take advantage of them to promote empowerment. Gilchrist (2009, p. 95) states that: "the purpose of development of the community is to support and shape the creation of formal and informal networks in order to facilitate and make real the empowerment of collective action."

*Inter-academic cooperation and scientific research*

Juan and colleagues (2013), consistent with the indications of the Lisbon Strategy of 2005 (CRUE, 2001), state that this approach promotes scientific cooperation, through programs of inter-university cooperation and scientific research with the goal of a fair and more participatory society. These initiatives require voluntary actions, cooperation and work of the third social sector. They also require the integration of theory and

practice, “managing academic, scientific and professional competencies intended for intervention in an innovative field of inter-university cooperation” (Juan et al., 2013, p. 71), and the ability to implement projects tailored to specific social contexts. Our experiences with the University of Oujda in Morocco and the National Institute for Work and Social Studies of Tunisia exemplify university cooperation and social commitment to knowledge transfer.

### *Academic career and propensity to technology transfer*

A study by Aceytuno and Sánchez-López (2014), analyzed this topic in the case of the University of Huelva. The contributions of knowledge and technology transfer have important implications for the efficiency of technology transfer (Berbegal-Mirabent, Lafuente, & Sole, 2013; Zarrabeitia, Díaz, Ruiz, & Alvarez, 2010). According to the previously mentioned authors, personal attributes and the characteristics of their professional and academic career “determine the propensity of researchers to engage in technology transfer” (Aceytuno & Sánchez-López, 2014, pp. 80–81). The value of their study does not stem from the generalizability of findings, but from their ability to provide insights into complex phenomena. Findings suggest gender differences that give men a greater propensity to engage in technology transfer activities. Other factors associated to the greater propensity to engage in technology transfer include the academic discipline of the researcher, seniority in the university, academic rank and possession of a doctorate. Furthermore, researchers who publish more have a greater propensity towards technology transfer.

Feixas et al. (2013) conducted another research study on factors that influence teaching transfer of university faculty. They collected data by administering the *Teaching Transfer Factor Questionnaire* in 18 universities (n = 1,026). Findings related to teacher training programs in Spanish universities, revealed highly frequent use of short-term training modalities (courses, seminars, workshops) versus seven long training activities. They also revealed a tendency to focus training on competency development in the areas of management, the teaching-learning process, communication and language skills, technological skills and personal development. Because of this, we propose

that there is a measure of transfer in teacher's training. This takes place mostly within the context of programs that focus on the development of teaching capacity and not of programs seeking curricular, institutional or professional development (Feixas et al., 2013).

*Educational Model of Knowledge Transfer for Innovation in Social Work (EMKTISW)*

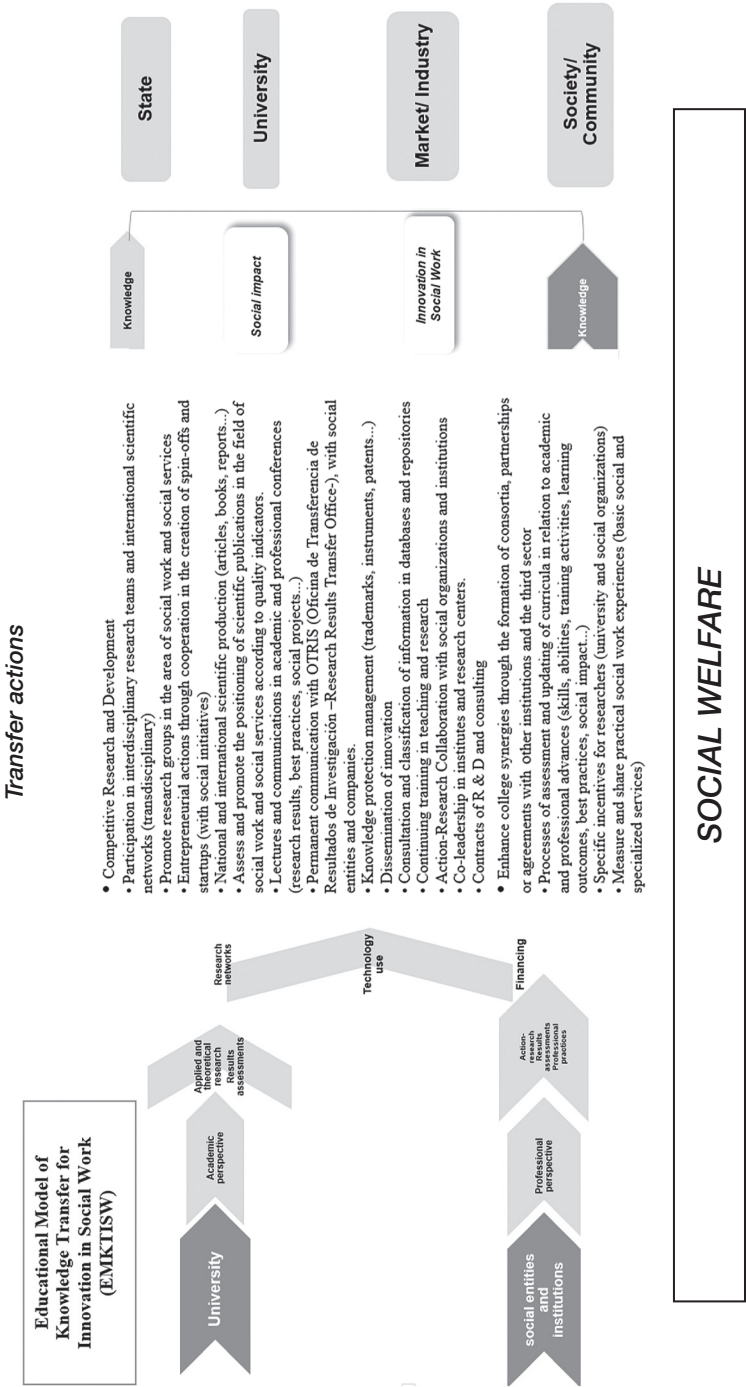
As noted at the beginning, this article contains a literature review on the topic of knowledge transfer and various formative experiences aimed at producing social transformations. Based on this, we propose a model of innovation in social work. This model should contribute to the dissemination of research findings and professional experiences. This model seeks to provide guidance to social work practitioners and researchers, given that knowledge transfer revolves around research and the application of research findings to professional practice.

The Educational Model of Knowledge Transfer for Innovation in Social Work (METCITS) involves 19 actions related to research and innovation initiated by government agencies, businesses, University research, development and innovation projects, and civic organizations. We emphasize that this educational model originates in academia and in civic organizations trying to impact the welfare state. The model is based on the following premises: (1) the university, from an academic perspective, conducts theoretical or basic, and applied research. Academic research projects are usually sophisticated and ambitious, and supported by interdisciplinary scientific networks; (2) civic institutions, social entities, and practicing professionals demand research knowledge with practical applications. They participate in the integration of research and practice to improve interventions and social care.

Universities and other social institutions or entities rely on research networks, technology and public and/or private funding to develop a set of transfer actions (see Figure 1) (Arias y Aristizábal, 2011; Barro, 2015; De Wit, 2011; Friedman y Silberman, 2003; Hidalgo, 2006; Parellada, 2015). This generates knowledge and facilitates novel ideas that, through different processes, contribute to greater social impact. Thus, the level of impact is determined by the cumulative effect of transformative



Figure 1. Educational Model of Knowledge Transfer for Innovation in Social Work (EMKTISW)



actions that inform the formulation of social policies by the state, such as care plans, programs and projects, redistribution of resources, employability models, sustainability mechanisms and social solidarity. Within universities, these actions may facilitate the creation of new methods, models, techniques, development, indicators of quality, novel ideas. In the market and in the industry they may lead to the creation of new models of social attention, productive sector, reliability, and validity. Finally, in communities and civil society, these actions may lead to social rights, resources, benefits, and citizen participation.

The University fulfills its social responsibility by responding to the demands of society and contributing to economic and social development through knowledge transfer. This entails a collective effort on the part of the university, the state and the business sector. Subsequently, society is incorporated as a receptor and participant of the synergies that result from the different innovation processes. This forces all other actors to become involved and become accountable to funders of special initiatives and to those who demand social innovations.

The role of the social work discipline from human rights and social justice perspective is to contribute to improve social welfare. Social workers, as agents of change and mediators between government and other actors, must take advantage of their positions within universities, institutions and various social entities to facilitate the creation of educational approaches that generate knowledge and applied models.

The goal of scientific discovery is not only to produce goods and services while being guided by competitiveness and productivity; it must also seek to meet social needs and promote cooperation. Social work has a shared responsibility with other disciplines to research, innovate, transfer knowledge and contribute to the well-being of society.

### Conclusion: From Social Innovation to Full Citizenship

This article has described several processes and actions associated with the transfer of knowledge and innovation in social work. Our profession is immersed in a social context dominated by globalization and the internationalization of university

education. Our information- and knowledge-driven society requires that we connect academia, scholarship and technology to the professional practice of social workers. We need to formulate effective and rational policies at the university level related to knowledge transfer to the profession and to society with the ultimate goal of improving our collective welfare.

Scientific and technological innovations are directly related to economic and social development. As part of their response to social problems, universities are expected to use foresight to analyze future trends and formulate pertinent competitive or cooperative strategies in partnership with civil society.

Social work research faces multiple new challenges, such as those described in *Horizon 2020*. Collective problems demanding an effective response include physical illness, demographic changes and the resulting demands on the welfare state. There is a need to concentrate knowledge transfer efforts during the next ten years on the three areas of: technology and aging; technology, environmental management and citizen participation; and technology and advanced automation (López, 2014).

These challenges require researchers to generate knowledge to be transferred to the state as well as the public and private sectors to guide and/or inform their policies and collective actions. We must engage in research-informed practices, especially when working under adverse conditions. Social work researchers, educators and practitioners must work cooperatively with other professionals, the business sector and government officials to generate, disseminate and apply new knowledge. Social workers should participate in research and knowledge transfer that lead to social innovation, as a sign of disciplinary maturity, to sustain and advance educational programs, to favor social transformations, and to help members of our societies enjoy full citizenship.

## References

- Aceytuno, M., & Sánchez-López, C. (2014). Carrera académica y propensión a la transferencia de tecnología. El caso de la Universidad de Huelva. *Investigaciones Regionales*, 28, 79–100.
- Arias, J., & Aristazábal, C. (2011). Transferencia de conocimiento orientada a la innovación social en la relación ciencia-tecnología y sociedad. *Pensamiento y gestión*, 31, 137–.
- Barro, S. (Ed.). (2015). *La transferencia de I+D, la innovación y el emprendimiento en las universidades. Educación superior en Iberoamérica*. Chile, Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (CINDA).
- Beraza, J., & Rodríguez, A. (2009). *Boletín Económico de ICE*, 2979, 33–46.
- Berbegal-Mirabent J., Lafuente, E., & Solé, F. (2013). The pursuit of knowledge transfer activities: An efficiency analysis of Spanish universities. *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 2051–2059.
- Cabero, J., Ballesteros, C., & López, E. (2015). Los mapas conceptuales interactivos como recursos didácticos en el ámbito universitario. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 26 (núm. especial), 51–76.
- CRUE. (2001). *Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas*. www.crue.org [Consultada en septiembre de 2015]
- De la Fuente, Y. (2014). El Libro blanco de diseño para todos en la universidad: el grado en trabajo social en España. En Pastor y Martínez-Román (Eds.). *Trabajo social en el siglo XXI, Una perspectiva internacional comparada* (pp. 119–127). Madrid: Grupo 5.
- De Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: A historical, comparative, and conceptual analysis*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- De Wit, H. (2011). Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. *Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento*, 8(2), 77–84.
- Domínguez, M. (2009). Responsabilidad social universitaria. *Humanismo y Trabajo Social*, 8, 37–67.
- Feixas, M., et al. (2013). ¿Cómo medir la transferencia de la formación en Educación Superior?: el Cuestionario de Factores de Transferencia. *Revista de Docencia Universitaria (REDU)*, 11(3), 219–248.
- Friedman, J., & Silberman, J. (2003). University technology transfer: Do incentives, management, and location matter? *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 28, 17–30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1021674618658>
- Galindo, J., Sanz, P., & de Benito, J. (2011). La Universidad ante el reto de la transferencia del conocimiento 2.0: Análisis de las herramientas digitales a disposición del gestor de transferencia. *Investigaciones Europeas de Dirección y Economía de la Empresa*, 17(3), 111–126. Disponible en <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=274120128006> > ISSN 1135-2523

- García-Castilla, F., & Vírveda, E. (2016a). *La transferencia del conocimiento en trabajo social. Investigación y experiencia práctica para la innovación*. Editorial: McGraw-Hill Interamericana De España. En prensa.
- García-Castilla, F., Vírveda, E. (2016b). Inclusión de competencias digitales en los estudios de grado en Trabajo Social. *Revista Opción*, 32(9), 802–820.
- Goyette, G., y Lessard-Herbet, M. (1988). *La investigación acción. Funciones, fundamentos e instrumentación*. Laertes: Barcelona.
- Guerrero, M., & Urbano, D. (2012). Transferencia de conocimiento y tecnología. Mejores prácticas en las universidades emprendedoras españolas. *Gestión y Política Pública*, 21(1), 107–139.
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). *The new production of knowledge. The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. Londres: SAGE.
- Gilchrist, A. (2009). *The well-connected community: A networking approach to community development*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Hidalgo, A. (2006). *Mecanismos de transferencia de tecnología y propiedad industrial entre la universidad, organismos públicos de investigación y las empresas*. Sevilla: Colección EOI Tecnología e Innovación.
- Juan, E., Morata, B., Morante, M., Trujillo, M., & Raya, E. (2013). El trabajo social en el ámbito de la transferencia de conocimientos. Experiencias de cooperación interuniversitaria en países mediterráneos. *Documentos de Trabajo Social*, 52, 55–74.
- IFSW (2004). *Proposition pour un nouveau document d'éthique*. Assemblée Générale de la FITS, 29 Sept–1 Oct. in Adelaide, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.ifsw.org/p38000399.html>
- Juárez, P., & Avellaneda, N. (Noviembre de 2011). *Red de tecnologías para la inclusión social. Construyendo conocimiento científico y tecnológico entre Estado, Universidades, Cooperativas de trabajo y OSC*. XI Congreso Iberoamericano de Extensión Universitaria: Integración, extensión docencia e investigación para la Inclusión y cohesión social. Santa Fe, Argentina.
- Kindelán, M. (2013). Una perspectiva sobre el binomio enseñanza-investigación en la universidad del s. XXI. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 24(1), 27–45. Disponible en [httpdx.doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_RCED.2013.v24.n1.41190](httpdx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_RCED.2013.v24.n1.41190)
- Knight, J. (2008). *Higher education in turmoil. The changing world of internationalization*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- López, A. (2012). Profesión, ciencia y ciudadanía: Retos para el trabajo social y los servicios sociales en el siglo XXI. *Azarbe, Revista Internacional de Trabajo Social y Bienestar*, 1, 61–71.

- López A. (2014). Investigación y transferencias en trabajo social. En E. Pastor, y M. Martínez-Román (Eds.), *Trabajo social en el siglo XXI. Una perspectiva internacional comparada* (pp. 39–46). Madrid: Grupo 5.
- Marín, I., Valarezo, K., & Sarango, P. (2014). Transferencia del conocimiento universitario para disminuir pobreza extrema a través de RSU, el caso de la UTPL. *Investigación Cualitativa en Ciencias sociales*, 3, 223–228.
- Martínez, M., Díaz, M., Lima, A., Herrera, M., & Herrera, E. (2014). Un análisis bibliométrico de la producción académica española en la categoría de Trabajo Social del Journal Citation Report. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 27(2), 429–438
- Palma, M. (2012). Marco legislativo actual de la transferencia de conocimiento en España. En X. Testar (Ed.), *La transferencia de tecnología y conocimiento universidad-empresa en España: estado actual, retos y oportunidades* (pp. 9–12). Colección Documentos CUD 17/2012. Barcelona: Fundación CYD. <http://www.fundacioncyd.org/images/documentosCyd/CYD17.pdf>
- Parrellada, M., & Mediavilla, A. España. (2015). Informe 2015. En S. Barro (Ed.), *La transferencia de I+D, la innovación y el emprendimiento en las universidades. Educación superior en Iberoamérica* (pp. 259–292). Chile: Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (CINDA).
- Rodríguez, M. (2016). La intervención del trabajador social desde las redes sociales en trabajo social comunitario: fundamentos, dimensiones y competencias. *Zerbitzuan*, 61, 65–78.
- Sewpaul, W. and Jones, D. (2007). Global standards for social work education and training. *Social Work Education*, 23(5), 493–513, DOI:10.1080/0261547042000252244
- Vázquez-Cano, E., and López, E. (2014). Los MOOC y la educación superior: La expansión del conocimiento. *Profesorado, Revista de Curriculum y Formación del Profesorado*, 18(1), 3–12.
- Vázquez, O. (Ed., 2004). *Libro blanco del título de grado en trabajo social*. Huelva: ANECA. Disponible en [http://portal.uned.es/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/UNED\\_MAIN/LAUNIVERSIDAD/VICERRECTORADOS/ESPACIOEURO/LIBROS%20BLANCOS%20DE%20GRADO/LIBROBLANCO\\_TRBJSOCIAL\\_DEF.PDF](http://portal.uned.es/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/UNED_MAIN/LAUNIVERSIDAD/VICERRECTORADOS/ESPACIOEURO/LIBROS%20BLANCOS%20DE%20GRADO/LIBROBLANCO_TRBJSOCIAL_DEF.PDF). (Consultado el: 04.07.2015)
- Zarrabeitia, E., Díaz, P., Ruiz, P., & Álvarez, I. (Septiembre de 2010). *Análisis de las aportaciones teóricas y regularidades empíricas en la literatura nacional reciente sobre el fenómeno de la universidad emprendedora y las spin-off universitarias*. IV International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Industrial Management, Donostia, España.
- Zárraga, J. (2009). Por qué, qué y para qué investigamos: La trastienda de la investigación social. *Política y Sociedad*, 46(3), 37–56.

# Global Interdependence and its Effects on Social Work Education in the United States

Mioara Diaconu

*Western Michigan University*

Laura Racovita-Szilagyi

Samantha Graham

*Southern Adventist University*

*Social workers in the United States are confronted on a daily basis with challenges reflecting the imprint of globalization. Nevertheless, research shows that most of them are not trained to deal with the global realities of the 21st century, including how to use a rights-based sustainable development approach. This article proposes the use of a rights-based development model as opposed to a charity-based approach. It provides a rationale for implementing a global perspective in social work education that addresses sustainable development consistent with social work values and unique mission. Furthermore, it proposes that it is paramount to adhere to a global perspective in social work education, especially in light of growing global interdependence in economics, communication, and human migration. The article discusses the implications of trends in online/distance education learning to global social work practice, and outlines implications of globalization and the growing global interdependence to social work theory, welfare policy, and practice. It also stresses the need to include this content in field education. The article concludes with a discussion on how to incorporate global content into social work curricula and how to overcome the barriers that may emerge in this process.*

*Key words: globalization, social work education, charity model, rights-based development, sustainable development.*



## Introduction

Globalization as a concept has been at the forefront of the current interdisciplinary literature, with an emphasis on its effect on global economies and management across cultures. Throughout its long history, the charity-based model emphasized donations by individuals, foundations, and developed countries, creating an environment where the receivers became highly dependent on the donors with no long-term sustainable impact. According to many authors, a rights-based sustainable development approach should become an important part of social work curricula, and be incorporated into learning competencies (Barner & Okech, 2013; Mocanu, Vasiliu, & Stancu, 2012; Zolfaghari, Sabran, & Zolfaghari, 2009). During the last three to four decades, social work literature has emphasized the need to include global content and models for sustainable development in its curricula, consistent with the profession's mission and values (Barner & Okech, 2013; Dominelli, 2010; Gatenio Gabel, & Healy, 2012; Riebschleger & Agbényiga, 2012). Yet, we still have a long way to go before achieving comprehensive infusion of global content and learning outcomes throughout social work curricula. In light of current events, such infusion is of paramount importance to effectively respond to social problems in the United States and abroad (Barner & Okech, 2013; Edwards, 2011; IFSW, 2017; Riebschleger & Agbényiga, 2012). Furthermore, thanks to recent advances in technology and communication worldwide, more and more universities are now offering distance education courses and fully online social work programs. This phenomenon brings the need to include global content in theory and practice courses to the forefront of social work education (Alphonse, George, & Moffat, 2008; Mocanu, Vasiliu, & Stancu, 2012; Zolfaghari, Sabran, & Zolfaghari, 2009).

Emerging trends in social welfare include crisis response and rebuilding, and the need to empower displaced and/or oppressed populations due to natural or technological disasters. Images of the devastation caused by hurricanes, massive tsunami, wars, and refugee crises (such as those in the Middle East and Europe) are brought to us through the mass media on a daily basis. These events, along with increased globalization, make it evident that we live in a 'global village.' Individuals and

communities are becoming more aware of the effects of globalization on people and governments as a result of international economic treaties such as WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA, GATT and international social, economic, political, and environmental summits (Gibson, Hall, & Tavlas, 2012). Furthermore, the ease of global travel and economic and cultural exchange has made globalization a household issue (Bertucci & Alberti, 2001; Edwards, 2011; Gatenio Gabel & Healy, 2012).

Poverty, disease epidemics, and natural or technological disasters are not restrained by geographic or national borders. What happens in one part of the world often has an impact in other parts of the globe. For example, efforts to integrate refugees into a local community are often a direct consequence of events, social problems, and policies thousands of miles away. Immigration and refugee crises are triggered by situations in sending countries and these in turn necessitate community planning, interventions and additional welfare services in receiving countries (Riebschleger & Agbényiga, 2012).

Today, in the United States of America (USA), social workers are confronted on a daily basis with diverse situations reflecting the imprint of globalization. Examples of such situations are female genital mutilation of female refugees in the USA coming from African countries, and American global aid workers and their families experiencing culture shock, adaptation anxiety, and feelings of abandonment when working overseas and when they return to the USA. The United States Census Bureau (2015) estimates that over 13% of the total population living in the U.S. is foreign-born. This percentage includes economic immigrants as well as refugees and asylum seekers in need of specialized social work interventions by professionals with global social work expertise and skills. In order to effectively address these situations, social workers need knowledge and competence stemming from various social sciences such as anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, etc.

The challenges faced by the social work profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have led scholars to question whether the profession and social work academic programs are up to the great demands posed by globalization (Hokenstad & Midgley, 1997; Zolfaghari et al., 2009). The way we respond to globalization is greatly influenced by our professional values of *service* and *social justice*

(NASW, 2008), and the mandate for a positive, sustainable, and human rights-based empowering social change that “enhances [the] wellbeing” of the people (IFSW, 2017, para 2). Because of this, many social workers are learning how events and policies abroad impact the profession at home and are preparing to effectively respond to these events (Gatenio Gabel & Healy, 2012). Global trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century make more evident the need for a paradigm shift within in social work education and practice in the USA.

Social work scholarly literature projected this conceptual shift even before the end of the last century. In 1996, Payne stated that “we need a changed conception of social work which represents effectively the whole range of its knowledge and skills throughout the world” (p. 172). Nagy and Falk (2000) suggested two ways to attain the much-needed paradigm shift in social work higher education. In their opinion, social work programs in the USA should either: (1) infuse global content throughout the curriculum, or (2) provide specialized educational opportunities for those interested in pursuing careers in global social work. Current global trends, suggest that almost two decades after Nagy and Falk made their suggestions, it is more imperative than ever for social work practitioners to have a working knowledge of global social issues, and the ability to work with diverse clients in the USA and abroad (Edwards, 2011; Mocanu et al., 2012). Social work programs must educate students in global issues and/or provide hands-on experiences in other countries if they want their graduates to be competitive in the current workforce. This is particularly true considering the potential global impact of distance/online social work education. Online education may potentially change the face of social work education at the global level through unprecedented access to information and technology. In the long term, this educational shift could help the profession become more responsive to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century social work clients and practitioners. As shown in the following pages, the social work profession promoted the inclusion of global content in the curriculum before the widespread access to information and technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## The Mission and Definition of Global Social Work

Growing global interdependence and global population movements greatly influenced Elis Enval in the early 1990s. At the time, he was president of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). He became aware of the increasing effects of globalization on technology, economics, politics and culture. Based on these observations, he concluded that the social work profession should redefine its practice to respond to new global developments in order to become more relevant. Subsequently, during its 2000 biennial general meeting, the IFSW agreed to replace the 1982 definition of international social work with a new definition emphasizing the relevance of human rights as key aspects of healthy human relationships in a context of problem solving, social change, empowerment, and enhancement of people's well-being (IFSW, 2017). This new definition may serve as a mission statement that synthesizes the reason for the existence of a profession united in purpose while playing different roles across the globe. A year after adopting the new IFSW definition, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) adopted IFSW's definition, showcasing the importance of understanding peoples and cultures in their social environmental contexts across cultures (Hare, 2004). Similarly, the National Association of Social Workers, through its Code of Ethics, emphasizes the need for social workers to promote the welfare of individuals and communities locally as well as globally (NASW, 2008). Following the same principles, the Council on Social Work Education, through its Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards, states that the purpose of social work education is to instill knowledge and skills for practice across systems, from the local to the global (CSWE, 2015).

## Globalization and Social Work

Current global events make evident the need for a paradigm shift in social work education and practice in the USA. For this reason, it is important to understand what globalization is and how it impacts social work education. Midgley (1997, p. xi), in his

seminal work *Social Welfare in Global Context*, defined globalization as “a process of global integration in which diverse peoples, economies, cultures, and political processes are increasingly subjected to international influences.” Almost two decades later, IFSW defined globalization as “the process by which all peoples and communities come to experience an increasingly common economic, social, and cultural environment” (IFSW, 2012, p. #?). These definitions show that globalization affects the state of the world economy as well as each particular culture and its people. The globalization of the economy, democracy, and science is redefining the way people relate to each other, address social justice and well-being, communicate, and exchange goods and services (Bertucci & Alberti, 2001; Mocanu et al., 2012; Mohan, 1999). Given that globalization may have both positive and negative effects on individual societies, social workers must be prepared to address both positive and negative consequences of globalization (Barbera, 2006). For example, the way in which the European Union (E.U.) handled the economic crisis of Greece illustrates some of the positive and negative aspects of globalization. Joining the E.U. required Greece to adopt the E.U.’s currency. The adoption of the Euro contributed to the Greek economic crisis, given that, as part of the E.U., the country now had to compete with large-scale European economies. Many believe that Greece’s inability to do this resulted in the country’s financial crisis and the subsequent social upheaval (Gibson et al., 2012).

### Implications for Social Work Theory, Welfare Policy, Practice, and Education

Social work practice in North America is primarily focused on clinical practice with individuals and families (Gray & Fook, 2004). As a result, there is not much room in the curricula to teach skills relevant for rights-based sustainable community development. According to Caragata and Sánchez (2002), North American social work focus on direct practice and clinical work represents the greatest obstacle to the involvement of social workers in the global arena. Very few graduates with a macro social work background become involved in global social work, in spite of the profession’s commitment to social justice (Hill, Ferguson,

& Erickson, 2010). This limitation was previously observed by Taylor (1999). He stated that deficits in the American higher education system have prevented the profession from developing a macro social work vision with an emphasis on social justice. In response to this, Katsui (2009) has proposed a shift from the charity model to a rights-based sustainable development approach expected to empower groups and communities. This will require addressing social work core principles and mission from a global perspective and understanding the implications of this for social work theory, policy, practice and education.

### *Implications of Globalization for Social Work Theory*

The “person-in-environment” approach, with an added global perspective, was chosen as a fundamental concept in social work practice in 2000 by the IFSW task force. It was also included in the revised 2015 CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (CSWE, 2015). This has brought attention to two major theoretical frameworks related to globalization: theories of human behavior and theories of social systems. According to Hare (2004), the IFSW highlights three important aspects: “evidence-based knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and bio-psychosocial factors” (p. 415). Evidence-based knowledge is used for decision-making in practice and stems from a combination of best practices, practitioner’s professional judgment, and the client’s environmental context and values (Spencer, Detrich, & Slocum, 2012). Indigenous knowledge stems from the cultural and economic reality of a specific community (Hare, 2004). Bio-psychosocial factors acknowledge the diversity of contexts, social and cultural values, and the uniqueness of each individual affected by social work assessment and interventions (Hare, 2004). Social work theory in the context of globalization recognizes the unique value and contribution of the environment to the development and well-being of all people.

### *Implications of Globalization for Social Work Advocacy to Impact Policy Change*

In the United States, social workers often engage in advocacy to produce policy change at the local, regional, state and

national levels. Two of the most important problems affecting humanity today are poverty and the violation of human rights. Given the complexities associated with these problems and given the interconnectedness of social, economic, and political systems, social workers are encouraged to draw from the experiences and/or expertise of other countries to aid in their change efforts (Hokenstad & Midgley, 2004). Regardless of its domestic or international context, the advocacy process designed to impact policy change should follow several main steps. These include: (1) researching the issues and potential impacts; (2) information dissemination and awareness building in the larger societal context; (3) coordinating and organizing grass roots advocacy activities, and last, but not least, (4) influencing sustainable policy change (Queiro-Tajalli, McNutt, & Campbell, 2003). Poverty presents many challenges, regardless of its geographical location, social, economic or political context. Poverty is associated with hunger, "disease, violence, family disintegration, indignities and sometimes even death" (Seipel, 2003, p. 191). Unfortunately, globalization has had the unintended effect of increasing poverty instead of eradicating it. According to Seipel (2003), some of the unintended consequences of globalization include: (a) economic stagnation or economic decline especially in underdeveloped or developing countries; (b) income inequality; (c) increased external debt among underdeveloped and developing countries; and (d) lack of commitment to education in many parts of the world (p. 195).

National economies are often poorly regulated or driven by unaccountable market forces. Furthermore, economic problems are exacerbated by lack of corporate responsibility. As a result, researchers and watchdog organizations have observed a continued increase in poverty levels and income inequality, despite the United Nations Millennium Goals (Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, 2012). This shows that, although global capitalism and globalization have brought wealth to a few nations or individuals, it has also broadened the gap between the rich and the poor.

Social service spending represents a good indicator of increased poverty in many countries. Social service spending is usually drastically reduced or severed when countries face economic instability. A country's level of poverty is often reflected



in its education and healthcare spending (Seipel, 2003). Many believe that social work is one of the very few professions qualified to deal holistically with the consequences of poverty. For this reason, Seipel (2003) provides the following recommended course of action for the profession: (1) fully embrace the principles of social and political justice; (2) schools of social work must become active agents of social change; (3) social workers must increase their efforts to interact with international bodies such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, the IMF, FAO, and other similar NGOs; and (4) facilitate the building of political solidarity among poor people (pp. 204–206). Furthermore, Krumer-Nevo, Weiss-Gal, and Monnickendam (2009) suggest that the social work profession should: (1) shift the focus from individuals and family treatment to community work and development; (2) use interventions at the global socioeconomic level rather than the individual level; (3) advocate and empower; (4) connect and network with others; and (5) use client input to determine the nature of needed interventions and desired social change.

Human rights are another very important concept intricately intertwined with poverty and social welfare policy. The United Nations Center for Human Rights defines human rights as “those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings” (1994, p. 4). The headlines on television, newspapers, and magazines lead the public to erroneously believe that human rights abuses are taking place only in refugee camps, in countries torn apart by wars, or in countries struggling under oppressive regimes. Amnesty International, however, reports numerous past and present human rights violations that are taking place in the United States. This includes sexual and physical abuse as an ongoing reality and lack of access to qualified medical care in cases of treatable medical conditions among incarcerated men and women in the United States (Amnesty International Report cited in Queiro-Tajalli et al., 2003, p.150).

For these and other reasons, social workers should also undertake the role of human rights activists, consistent with the profession’s main mission and purpose of meeting people’s basic human needs and the desire to uphold and protect the rights of disenfranchised or at-risk populations, such as children,

women, the elderly, refugees, etc. The desire of social workers around the world to promote social justice has led them to engage in social action that in certain countries often resulted in incarceration (Hare, 2004). Education is "a process of empowerment" (Mohan, 2003, p. 70). For this reason, social work graduates must be empowered to bring about social change that will protect the human rights of vulnerable populations.

Access to basic and specialized education represents an often overlooked aspect of social justice. In response to this need, distance/online learning has emerged to provide greater opportunities for social inclusion and empowerment by providing access to education for individuals who otherwise would have little or no access, including disabled individuals, mothers of young children, full-time employees who must support their families, or other non-traditional students living in rural or urban areas. Social work education could use distance/online learning to prepare students for intercultural practice and the realities of diverse contexts around the globe (Barner & Okech, 2013; Mocanu et al., 2012).

### *Implications of Globalization for Social Work Practice*

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) represent key agents for social change and social development at the global level (Kamler, 2011). They provide humanitarian assistance to people in need, such as relief to people affected by natural and man-made disasters. They also assist with the mitigation and reconstruction process. Although the opportunities seem to exist, research shows that international NGOs and other international development agencies rarely hire qualified social workers for social work related jobs (Caragata & Sanchez, 2002). As a result of not using professionally-trained social workers, many international NGOs "deservedly" acquire a bad reputation in spite of their good intentions (Drucker, 2003). Drucker saw this phenomenon as a failure of the social work profession to influence practice at global levels through direct practice in international NGOs and other international agencies (Drucker, 2003).

*Implication of Globalization for Social Work Education*

The underlying causes of poverty, human rights violations and many other social issues are overlapping and interrelated, regardless of a country's geographical location or economic situation. Knowledge of these overarching similarities and dynamics will, without a doubt, help social workers respond more effectively to these problems in their own practice contexts. Gaining this awareness must begin in the classroom and continue through lifelong learning and continuing education (Riebschleger & Agbényiga, 2012).

Although the Council of Social Work Education does not mandate the introduction of global content in social work curricula, its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) recommend that curricula should be "guided ... by a global perspective" (CSWE, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, EPAS states that the purpose of social work is to enhance "the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally" (CSWE, 2015, p. 5). Finally, the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the student body of schools of social work should serve as additional motivation to include relevant global content in their curricula.

### Incorporating Global Content into Social Work Curricula

The growing interdependence of modern societies and the effect of this on social work practice and education should motivate students and faculty members to seek a greater understanding of economic, political, social, legal, ethical and environmental factors contributing to global or international social problems. Students must learn in the classroom to address social issues in their global context, how to develop relationships with other countries to implement social work solutions for global issues, and how to compare social problems and responses among industrialized and developing countries (Gatenio Gabel & Healy, 2012). The previously described competencies are needed to produce effective social work practitioners who can intervene and advocate across national and international systems.

Healy (1986, 1995) has proposed five approaches that could be used in order to include global content in social work curricula: (1) inclusion of specific courses on global social work; (2) infusion of global content into select existing courses; (3) internationalization, or a comprehensive infusion of global topics across the curriculum; (4) a concentrated program of specialized courses; and (5) individual study, which can be considered specialization at the individual level. The effectiveness of these approaches has not been researched extensively. There is some evidence suggesting that these approaches may effectively help address the need for social work practitioners educated from a global perspective to address domestic issues resulting from globalization. Other scholars suggest that international field placements for students, and teaching abroad experiences for professors, could also help raise the awareness of global issues and better prepare students and academics to keep pace with the demands of the new century.

Opportunities for adding global content to the curriculum exist even when some social work programs believe that adding such content may overburden the program's curriculum, or that there are no resources available for students to study abroad. In these cases, programs have the option of infusing global content into existing core courses as suggested by Healy (1986, 1995). Meyer (2007) shared research findings related to infusing global content into a macro practice course. Findings revealed that exposure to global content increased students' level of understanding of the global dimensions of social problems. Study findings suggest that social work educators can use diverse approaches to address issues such as growing global interdependence and its influence on local practice. Other courses that could benefit from global content infusion are human behavior in the social environment, social policy, administration and planning, social welfare, ethics and diversity, research, and practice courses (Riebschleger & Agbényiga, 2012).

### Barriers to Incorporating of Global Content into the Social Work Curriculum

Zolfaghari, Sabran and Zolfaghari (2009) identified two types of barriers: institutional and individual. At the institutional level,

challenges include competing interests that may derail resources from such endeavors, lack of financial resources to design, create, or overhaul curricula, and lack of qualified personnel to assist with course development and technologies that allow for global educational exchange. From an individual perspective, faculty members may lack competence, expertise, or interest in global applications of social work practice, they may fear branching out into an unfamiliar area of study, or they may face academic overloads and no incentives for developing or including global content in their courses. There are also environmental factors affecting efforts to internationalize the curriculum. These include the employers' demand for specialized skills and competencies, and professional and regional accreditation requirements that may leave little room for additional curricular content (Edwards, 2011; Meyer, 2007; Zolfaghari et al., 2009).

These barriers could be overcome by raising the deans' and/or program directors' awareness to the importance of introducing global content into the social work curriculum. Working with the deans and directors has strategic value, given that they are well positioned to implement policy changes within their programs. Social work programs can also provide seminars and extracurricular events to help faculty, current students, alumni, and the community at large to become familiar with some global issues that may have global impact.

## Conclusion

Global economic, technological and political interdependence helps us understand how natural and manmade disasters and related events may impact local communities. It also highlights the need for social work programs to include cross-cultural and global content in their curricula, given that social work practitioners in the United States must also work with foreign-born individuals. The need for a global perspective has existed for decades. We propose that social work organizations should rely on such a global perspective to engage in effective local social work practice. Unfortunately, social work programs have been slow to incorporate or infuse needed global content in their curricula.

Efforts to globalize social work curricula may be greatly facilitated by the unprecedented level of access to computerized instructional technology and distance/online education opportunities. This significantly increases the potential for international students to participate in the United States' educational system. We recognize however, that students must be able to apply internationally acquired education to their respective local contexts in order for it to be relevant.

Poverty, human rights violations, and related problems are not only the responsibility of national legislative bodies. The global community must share responsibility for addressing these problems, given that they impact individuals and communities across the globe. In the United States, our profession should step outside of its comfort zone and the parameters imposed by the clinical paradigm. Social work programs are encouraged to add a global perspective and a rights-based approach to their curricula in order to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively respond to social problems (Offenheiser & Holcombe, 2003).

## References

- Alphonse, M., George, P., & Moffat, K. (2008). Redefining social work standards in the context of globalization: Lessons from India. *International Social Work*, 51(2), 145–158. DOI:10.1177/0020872807085855
- Barbera, R. A. (2006). Understanding globalization through short-term international field experiences. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 12(1), 287–302.
- Barner, J. R., & Okech, D. (2013). Teaching globalization to social work students: In and out of the classroom. *Social Work Education*, 32(8), 1061–1074. doi:10.1080/02615479.2012.730514
- Bertucci, G., & Alberti, A. (2001). *Globalization and the role of the state: Challenges and perspectives*. United Nations Public Administration Network. Retrieved from: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan006225.pdf>
- Caragata, L., & Sanchez, M. (2002). Globalization and global need: New imperatives for expanding international social work education in North America. *International Social Work*, 42(2), 217–238.
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). (2015). *Educational policy and accreditations standards*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=81660>

- Dominelli, L. (2010). Globalization, contemporary challenges and social work practice. *International Social Work*, 53(5), 599–612. DOI:10.1177/0020872810371201
- Drucker, D. (2003). Whither international social work? A reflection. *International Social Work*, 46(1), 53–81.
- Edwards, B. L. (2011). Social work education and global issues: Implications for social work practice. *Education*, 131(3), 580–586.
- Gatenio Gabel, S., & Healy, L.M. (2012). Introduction to the special issue: Globalization and social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(4), 627–634. DOI:10.5175/JSWE.2012.201200093
- Gibson, H. D., Hall, S. G., & Tavlas, G. S. (2012). The Greek financial crisis: Growing imbalances and sovereign spreads. *Journal of International Money and Finance*, 31(3), 498–516.
- Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. (2012). *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(4), 837–843.
- Gray, M., & Fook, J. (2004). The quest for a universal social work: Some issues and implications. *Social Work Education*, 23(5), 625–644.
- Hare, I. (2004). Defining social work for the 21st century: The International Federation of Social Workers' revised definition of social work. *International Social Work*, 47(3), 407–424.
- Healy, L. M. (1986). The international dimension in social work education: Current efforts, future challenges. *International Social Work*, 29, 135–147.
- Healy, L. M. (1995). Comparative and international overview. In D. E. Thomas, D. Watts, N. S. Mayadas (Eds.), *International handbook on social work education* (pp. 421–439). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hill, K. M., Ferguson, S. M., & Erickson, C. (2010). Sustaining and strengthening a macro identity: The association of macro practice social work. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18(4), 513–527.
- Hokenstad, M. C., & Midgley, J. (1997). Realities of global interdependence: Challenges for social work in a new century. In M. C. Hokenstad & J. Midgley (Eds.), *Issues in international social work: Global challenges for a new century* (pp. 1–10). Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers.
- Hokenstad, M. C., & Midgley, J. (Eds.) (2004). *Lessons from abroad: Adapting international social welfare innovations*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2012). *Globalization and the environment*. Retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/policies/globalisation-and-the-environment/>
- International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). (2017). *Global definition of social work*. Retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/>



- Kamler, E. (2011). NGO narratives in the global public sphere. *International Journal Of Diversity In Organisations, Communities & Nations*, 11(2), 75–86.
- Katsui, H. (2009). *Negotiating the human rights-based approach and the charity-based approach in development cooperation activities: Experiences of deaf women in Uganda*. Retrieved from <http://www.tokyo-foundation.org/sylff/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/katsui.pdf>
- Krumer-Nevo, M., Weiss-Gal, I., & Monnickendam, M. (2009). Poverty-aware social work practice: A conceptual framework for social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 225–243.
- Meyer, M. (2007). Globalization and social work education: Evaluation of student learning in a macro practice class. *Social Work Education*, 26(3), 247–260. DOI:10.1080/02615470601049818
- Midgley, J. (1997). *Social welfare in global context*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mocanu, M., Vasiliu, E., & Stancu, A. M. R. (2012). Some considerations on globalization and its effects on education. *The Annals of Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University. Economy, Commerce and Tourism Series*, 4(1), 93–104. Retrieved from: <http://management.ucdc.ro/revista/full%20text%202012/7.pdf>
- Mohan, B. (1999). *Unification of social work: Rethinking social transformation*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Mohan, B. (2003). *The practice of hope: Diversity, discontent and discourse*. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corp.
- Nagy, G., & D. Falk. (2000). Dilemmas in international and cross cultural social work education. *International Social Work*, 43(1), 49–60.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2008). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- Offenheiser, R. C., & Holcombe, S. H. (2003). Challenges and opportunities in implementing a rights-based approach to development: An Oxfam America perspective. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 32(2), 268–301. DOI:10.1177/0899764003032002006
- Payne, M. (1996). *What is professional social work?* Birmingham, UK: Venture Press (British Association of Social Workers).
- Queiro-Tajalli, I., McNutt, J., & Campbell, C. (2003). International social and economic justice and on-line advocacy. *International Social Work*, 46(2), 149–161.
- Riebschleger, J., & Agbényiga, D. L. (2012). An early planning model for increasing international content in social work education. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 17, 171–22.
- Seipel, M. (2003). Global poverty: No longer an untouchable problem. *International Social Work*, 46(2), 191–207.

- Spencer, T. D., Detrich, R., & Slocum, T. A. (2012). Evidence-based practice: A framework for making effective decisions. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35(2), 127–151.
- Taylor, Z. (1999). Values, theories and methods in social work education: A culturally transferable core? *International Social Work*, 42(3), 309–318.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Selected characteristics of the native and foreign-born populations 2010–2014. American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*. Retrieved from: [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_14\\_5YR\\_S0501&prodType=table](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_5YR_S0501&prodType=table)
- United Nations Center for Human Rights. (1994). *Human rights and social work: A manual for school of social work and the social work profession*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Zolfaghari, A., Sabran, M. S., & Zolfaghari, A. (2009). Internationalization of higher education: Challenges, strategies, policies and programs. *US-China Education Review*, 6(5), 1–9. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505713.pdf>



# The Importance of Social Work in the Latin American Association Movement of People Affected by Low Prevalence Diseases

Enrique Pastor Seller  
*Murcia University, Spain*

Juan Carrión Tudela  
*Latin American Alliance of Rare Diseases*

M. Bañón Hernández  
*Almeria University, Spain*

*This article analyses the experiences of the association movement in Latin America that brings together individuals and families with rare (RD) or low prevalence diseases (LPD). It also looks at their needs from global health, social, research and education perspectives. The nature of social work assessments and interventions in rare diseases helps us better understand the needs of people with RDs or LPDs and facilitates the creation of associations. Social work aims at consolidating the social fabric that will lead to the recognition of RDs as a health and social priority at an international level.*

*Key Words: Rare Disease (RD), Low Prevalence Disease (LPD), Latin American Alliance of Rare Diseases (ALIBER), Social Fabric, Association Movement—Social Work*

## Experiences of the Low Prevalence Diseases Association Movement in Latin America

The concept and the definition of 'rare diseases' are fundamentally based on criteria of prevalence and severity. Rare diseases are those in which there is danger of death or chronic disability, and low incidence (less than 5 cases per 10,000 people in Europe), according to the European Commission (Comisión Europea, 1999) and Posada, Martin-Arribas, Ramirez, Villaverde, and Abaitua (2008). We can find other names, such as low frequency disease, minor incidence disease, invisible disease, forgotten disease, orphan disease, uncommon disease, or catastrophic disease. In Latin America, the most frequent name is *low prevalence disease*. The patients and the associations that support them emphasize the importance of realizing that rare diseases can affect anyone at any stage of life. As the president of the Association of Relatives and those affected by Lipodystrophies (AELIP), says, "It's not strange to suffer from a rare disease. The disease is rare, not the people who suffer them" (Pérez de Tudela, 2013). From the medical perspective, rare diseases are characterized by a large number and wide diversity of disorders and symptoms that vary not only from one disease to another, but also within the same pathology. The same conditions can have different clinical manifestations on different persons. Many disorders have a remarkable number of subtypes. It is estimated that there are more than 7,000 rare diseases affecting the patients' physical, mental and sensory capabilities.

The rare diseases (RD) association movement has gained considerable strength and recognition in public forums in many countries (Carrión, Echandi, Banon, & Pastor, 2015). RDs are not circumscribed to races or countries; they can appear at any stage of life and anywhere in the world. It is estimated that 42 million people are affected by RDs in Latin America (ALIBER, 2016). The Latin American Alliance of Rare Diseases (ALIBER) is a nonprofit coalition that brings together several organizations of families and patients of Rare Diseases (RD) or Low Prevalence Diseases (LPD) that exist in Latin America.

In 2013, the Year of Rare Diseases in Spain, the Association for Rare Diseases D'Genes and the Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases (FEDER) created ALIBER, with the aims of sharing

knowledge and best practices, and improving the situation of people and families living with a rare disease in Latin America. D'Genes began this initiative after many requests for information from Latin American countries, which made evident the need for it. The Information and Orientation Service (SIO) of FEDER also received an increased number of requests for information and other assistance from Latin American countries (Arcos, Solves, & Rius, 2016). Since 2002 the SIO responded to 3564 queries, as detailed in figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of queries on RD from Latin America received by SIO-FEDER since 2012.

Country	No. of visits
Argentina	961
Mexico	571
Colombia	465
Peru	326
Chile	323
Venezuela	196
Ecuador	104
Uruguay	90
Cuba	86
Brazil	66
Guatemala	64
Bolivia	45
Portugal	45
Costa Rica	37
Panama	32
El Salvador	31
Spain	29
Honduras	23
Paraguay	23
Nicaragua	21
Dominican Republic	19
Andorra	7
TOTAL	3564

Source: SIO FEDER (<http://www.enfermedades-raras.org/>)

It became clear that there was an urgent need to establish a joint collaboration among Spanish-speaking countries to respond to this demand. The 2012 agreement among the FEDER foundation, the Colombian Federation of rare diseases (FECOER), and the Spanish Foundation of Help for Guatemala provided a strong precedent. This agreement marked the beginning of this international collaboration. During 2012 and 2013, FEDER worked with Latin America to contact other organizations of patients interested in participating in the project. The end of 2012 witnessed the agreement among the Portuguese Federation of Rare Diseases (FEDRA), the Mexican organization of Rare Diseases (OMER), and the Colombian Foundation CRONICARE (Carrión et al., 2015, p. 116).

Since then, D'Genes, together with Mrs. Elizabeth Zabalza, Director of the Spanish Foundation for Help to Guatemala; Mr. Javier Guerra, Delegate of Mundo Marfan Latino; and Mrs. Claudia Delgado, Delegate of FEDER, planned the first Latin American meeting of rare diseases, which was held in October 2013 in Totana, Murcia, Spain. At this event, the Latin American Alliance of Rare Diseases (ALIBER) was created and its first Board of Directors was elected. Its mission included the creation of a network of organizations for patients with rare diseases prevalent in Latin America, the coordination of actions to strengthen the alliance, creating public awareness of RDs, and representing RD patients in local, regional, national and international agencies. This created a forum of permanent collaboration for sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices in the areas of health, education, and work (ALIBER, 2016).

As for its vision, ALIBER seeks to be a coalition that brings together and empowers the different associations of RD patients in Latin America that defend the rights of the patients and their families. It disseminates information about legal rights and inequalities affecting people with rare diseases in different parts of the world. Towards this end, ALIBER works with other agencies and governments to improve the rights and the quality of life for those families. For the first time, in 2014, the International Day of Rare Diseases was held, and a Decalogue for the defense of the rights of people with rare diseases in Latin America was created. The Second Latin American Congress on Rare Diseases was held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2014; the Third Latin American Congress on Rare Diseases was held in Guadalajara, Mexico,



in July 2015; and the Fourth Latin American Congress on Rare Diseases was held in Montevideo, Uruguay in September 2016 (ALIBER, 2016).

It is worth noting that the first congress established the guidelines for the subsequent ones (Bañón & Fornieles, 2013). The First Latin American Congress on Rare Diseases was held on October 14-18, 2013, in Totana, Murcia, Spain. It was organized by D'Genes and the Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases and convened professionals as well as delegates from associations. Participating entities included the Colombian Federation of Rare Diseases (FECOER), the Argentinian Federation of Diseases of Low Prevalence (FADEPOF), the All Together Rare Diseases Association Uruguay (ATUERU), the Mundo Marfan Latino, CRONICARE Foundation of Colombia, the Ecuadorian Foundation of Patients with Lysosomal Storage (FEPEL-DASHA), the Mexican Federation of Rare Diseases (FEMEXER), the Argentinian Support Group for Patients with Rare Diseases (GADAPER), the Mexican Association of Patients with Lysosomal Storage (ACOPEL), the Mexican Organization of Rare Diseases (OMER), the Paolist Association of Mucopolysaccharidosis and Rare Diseases (AMPS e Rarissimas) of Brazil, the Federation of Rare Diseases of Portugal (FEDRA), the Orientation and Information Service of Guatemala, and the Augusto Turenne Foundation of Uruguay. As can be seen, this international congress brought together a wide range of organizations.

Without a doubt, the development of an international movement is crucial to promoting solid and enduring improvements in diagnosis, treatment, and equitable access to social and psychological educational resources. For this reason, the common goal is to make this network as wide as possible. The first congress linked the above-mentioned agencies with EURORDIS, the European rare diseases organization. We must ensure, however, that the conclusions and agreements reached during these congresses lead to significant action. One of the most important outcomes of these congresses has been the buy-in of all members of ALIBER and the election of a Board of Directors. Most significantly, the congress generated a climate of cooperation that will permeate all future work. It is vital to develop joint projects between Spain and Latin America, and to disseminate positive work models and best practices to other countries

(ALIBER, 2016). For this reason, it is also important to share information about negative experiences and failed initiatives.

ALIBER is currently composed of 26 organizations that represent 497 associations in 14 countries. Spain is the country with the highest number of associations (Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases, FEDER: 320 associations), followed by Argentina (Argentinian Federation of Diseases of Low Prevalence, FADEPOF: 62), Mexico (Mexican Organization of Rare Diseases, OMER: 19), Uruguay (All Together Rare Diseases Uruguay, ATUERU: 17), and Portugal (Federation of Rare Diseases of Portugal, FEDRA: 16) (ALIBER, 2016).

The work of ALIBER in partnership with nonprofit organizations of Latin America has increased public awareness of rare diseases and has turned them into more of a political, health and social priority by the national health systems of ALIBER-member countries (ALIBER, 2016). Victims of rare diseases and their relatives are protagonists in the consolidation of this international movement. This movement and related associations have come to answer their questions and respond to their needs.

### Features and Purpose of Organizations Related to Rare Diseases

The following are some of the features that characterize the organizations within the rare diseases association movement in Latin America: (a) they were founded by patients or their relatives; (b) they have arisen from the need to create a meeting point and common work arena; (c) they enable patients to contact each other and meet specialists in their particular health area; (d) they offer patients access to treatments and information about their pathology and rights; and (e) they aim to influence public policies and generate changes in the public health systems that may improve the quality of life for affected people.

Patient organizations play a key role in the new biopsychosocial model of health. These patient organizations are being recognized for their knowledge of patients' needs, their ability to collaborate, and their experience in putting RDs on the agenda of every country's health systems (Borrell-Carrió, Suchman, & Epstein, 2004). The primary purpose of RD organizations is to collaborate with health professionals in the care of patients.

The strategic objectives of ALIBER are: to increase public awareness of rare diseases as social, educational, work and health priorities; to represent people with rare diseases in Latin America; and to empower its member agencies.

In view of the above objectives and in response to its organizational mission and vision, ALIBER seeks to:

- Increase social visibility through:
  - Strengthening its strategic communication through its web page and other social media
  - Sensitizing key players in RD such as professionals, students, patients and governments
  - Bringing together key players in this movement through international congresses on Rare Diseases.
- Defend Human Rights through:
  - Establishing working relations and negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry for access to orphan drugs
  - Promoting the creation of alliances with organizations related to health and disability in Latin America
  - Increasing political influence and social mobilization in an effort to incorporate RD in health plans in Latin America
  - Promoting international cooperation
  - Creating a document identifying each country's policy in terms of RD health, education, work and research
- Provide Training and Disseminate Knowledge through:
  - Training a critical mass of professionals, doctors and researchers through the Latin American RD School
  - Promoting a model of care in RDs in each country through consensus
  - Establishing Alliances and Solidarity Networks to stimulate the multilateral cooperation of all sectors and actors related to RD in Latin America

- Effectively Manage Associations through:
  - Knowing and managing the challenges of the associations' movement in every country. This includes identifying the needs and problems related to RDs and their demands in terms of social participation
  - Promoting the creation of RD organizations and associations in Latin America
  - Promoting the participation of associations in international RD congresses.
- Engage in Social Action through:
  - The empowerment of associations and the development of RD Information and Orientation Services (SIO). SIO identifies the needs of affected people and thus develops a social action through improvement proposals based on knowledge of RD reality (ALIBER, 2016).

### Challenges to Safeguarding Equality of Health Rights

According to Palau (2010), and Saltonstall and Scott (2013), the main health problems of people suffering from RDs include misdiagnosis, lack of information, lack of scientific knowledge, lack of the appropriate quality care, high cost of the few existing drugs and treatment, and inequality of access to treatment and care, all of which will be explored below.

#### *Misdiagnosis*

Delays between the onset of the first symptoms and proper diagnosis involve high risks to patients' health. Misdiagnoses often lead to inadequate treatment in what could be described as the pre-diagnostic labyrinth. The average time between the onset of the first symptoms and diagnosis is 5 years, and for 20% of the sufferers, it can be 10 years or more (FEDER, 2009, pp. 43-44). Many more patients are still waiting for a diagnosis. FEDER (2009) received more than 3,160 queries from people without diagnosis seeking help. According to the ENSERIO

study (Study of Health and Social needs of people with a RD and their families), more than 40% of people with a diagnostic delay receive inadequate treatment or no support whatsoever (FEDER, 2009, p. 47).

Consequences of the delay can be detrimental to patients and their families. This delay deprives patients of the needed therapeutic intervention and often results in physical, intellectual and psychological deterioration. All of these could have been avoided with a more rapid diagnosis. Moreover, a late diagnosis leads to greater difficulty in accessing social help (Avelaneda et al., 2007).

*Lack of information, scientific knowledge, and appropriate quality care*

Useful and timely information is needed about the diseases and about places where proper help can be obtained. It is important to highlight that the lack of qualified professionals in the RD area represents a serious problem (Esteban, Ruano, Guerra, & Motero, 2015). Lack of scientific knowledge makes it difficult to develop therapeutic tools, defining intervention strategies and identifying appropriate medicines and medical approaches. Without combining the different knowledge fields associated to RDs, such as physiotherapy, nutrition, psychology, social work, etc., people affected can live for years in unstable conditions, without competent medical attention or rehabilitation. They often remain excluded from the health care system, even after diagnosis.

*High cost of the few existing drugs and treatment and inequality of access to treatment and care*

The high cost of health care and drugs, combined with the lack of social benefits, causes an impoverishment of the family and drastically increases inequality of access to care for RD patients (Graf & Frank, 2015). There is unequal access to innovative treatments due to delays in price setting and refund decisions. Additionally, doctors lack experience, and few are involved in RD clinical trials. There is also lack of consensus about best treatments.

## Human Rights Related to Education and Communication: Problems Integrating School, Work and Society

Rare or low prevalence diseases have significant adverse impacts on the physical health of the sufferers to the point of endangering their lives. This danger in combination with social and relevant psychological processes negatively impacts the well-being of the patients. RDs may lead to stigmatization, exclusion, low self-esteem, loneliness, and discrimination in affective relations, employment, finances, and/or the way they are represented in the media. In fact, when asked, patients often make reference to their social, educational and communication needs (FEDER, 2009; Jaeger, Rojvik, & Berglund, 2015; Pavol, 2015).

RDs have implications for all areas of life including education, job choice, leisure activities, and relationships with friends or one's partner. They can lead to stigmatization, isolation, exclusion from the community, difficulty in obtaining insurance (travel, life, mortgage, etc.), and reduction of job opportunities.

RDs affect education in particular. Fornieles et al. (2014), comment on the following 14 major topics that are relevant to RDs in Latin America:

- It is necessary to create interdisciplinary groups that consider rare diseases, gather experiences and offer solutions. All key players must be present in the group [pupils, teachers (also with rare diseases), parents (also with rare diseases), etc.].
- The lack of understanding of low prevalence diseases is common in schools. This ignorance spawns prejudices related to what students with these conditions can or cannot achieve.
- It is necessary to identify educational models that will effectively mainstream children with RDs. These models should lead to innovative projects and curricular adaptations.

- RDs must become part of primary and secondary education curricula. Because of their interdisciplinary nature, they can be incorporated into subjects as diverse as science, art, humanities, or new technologies.
- We must continue the efforts to share information and increase sensitization regarding RDs. This sensitization should focus on the search for equality and social justice in education, health and employment.
- Students with RDs represent a special challenge to their families. Educational institutions should make every effort to support families, and particularly siblings attending the same school. Families must be encouraged not to avoid the problem and not to overprotect these children.
- Students with RDs may become our future doctors, teachers, journalists or managers. Their education is important for our society in general, even though it represents a challenge. Challenges help people grow.
- We must pay special attention to the transitions between the different stages of education. Ignorance of RDs may result in the need to repeat educational content at the beginning of every semester or academic year, and may lead to the loss of educational support. It is particularly necessary to support students with RDs as they transition from secondary education to college and from college to higher university degree programs.
- Research on education and RDs must increase. It is important for researchers to contact persons with RDs who have been university students in order to identify the hurdles they encountered. Researchers are encouraged to visit educational institutions to interview students and teachers.
- Self-image during childhood and adolescence has not been taken sufficiently into account. This is



significant, given that victims of physically visible and invisible RDs may experience discrimination and bullying that may damage their self-image.

- On occasion, students with RDs are excluded from extracurricular activities, assuming that they cannot or do not want to participate. This may be due to teachers' reluctance. We should examine whether this problem can be solved with professional help or with the use of a mediator.
- There is a need to improve the collaboration between schools and hospitals, given that some pathologies require frequent hospitalizations for treatment or due to complications.
- RDs have become a new field in biomedical research. The same level of interest is necessary as we look at education. There is a need for original alternatives that may facilitate on-campus and off-campus education.
- Experts in teaching and pedagogy must collaborate with the Institutes of Education Sciences and Teachers Centers to generate proposals for new methodologies.

### *Problems in communication*

During the last 3 years, the FEDER agency has conducted an exhaustive analysis of RDs in Spain (Solves, Bañón, & Rius, 2015). Without a doubt, the same should be done in Latin America, as it would help to gain a better understanding of what citizens know about RDs, as well as assess the level of exposure of RDs through the media in each country.

The role of communication media in the process of inclusion or stigmatization is obvious. We know from various studies on gender, race and disabilities that the media is capable of facilitating these processes. An analysis of the media suggests that despite the availability of online information on RDs, they remain

vastly unknown to the public at large. In a similar manner, despite progress in recent years, RDs remain an unfamiliar topic for journalists and society as a whole (Bañón & Requena, 2014).

As a result, information professionals face multiple barriers, such as ignorance, unknown terminology, technological difficulties, and health and social complexities (Vicente, 2011, p. 395). These barriers could lead to information errors or avoidance, given that these themes may be considered too complex for their audiences. On the other hand, the perception of RD patient associations and patient families is that not enough progress has been made related to media visibility. Although media exposure has increased, it seems to be mostly limited to the International Day of RD. As Bañón and Fornieles say, “As these actions only take place at a particular moment, they only leave a temporary footprint that fails to give a clear picture of the existence and nature of those diseases amongst the public” (2011, p. 12).

From this, it becomes clear that we must carefully examine the accuracy, ethics and adequacy of the RD content disseminated by media such as newspapers, radio, TV and Internet. At the same time, it is necessary to influence the priorities of journalists to make sure RDs receive the coverage they deserve. It is also important to generate guidelines to help us interact with the media. Bañón and Fornieles (2011, pp. 203-206) propose that:

- The growing interest in RDs shown by the Spanish media must be consolidated.
- We must enter a new phase of communication about RDs in that the quality of information must improve.
- Authoritative sources, including researchers and RD patient associations, must be properly used.
- There is a need to better integrate RDs into the affairs of communication media.
- Communication professionals need additional training in the area of RDs.

- We should not use sensationalism to portray patients with RDs nor describe them as people in need of compassion. They should not be perceived as strange people.
- The media should investigate what health authorities say and what they actually do in relation to RDs.
- The attention given to leaders that support RDs should not overshadow the defense of the rights of patients and their families, and working towards better diagnosis, medical research or therapies.
- Media professionals must remember that they are also agents for reporting incorrect actions in health, social or educational fields.
- Media representation of conflicts or collaboration between professionals or public administration and patients should be used to reflect upon good and bad practice.

### Recommendations for Improving Patient Wellbeing

The following priorities have been adopted by ALIBER in Latin America

- Promote the inclusion of RDs in public health plans
- Promote RD research
- Disseminate RD-related information to patients, health workers and the general public
- Train health and social workers in RDs
- Recognize the unique social and health rights of RD patients

- Promote the creation of referral centers to improve access to and quality of care for RD patients
- Facilitate access to needed resources for a rapid diagnosis
- Encourage the development of and access to drugs and therapies for RDs
- Support the RD association movement
- Establish national and international collaborations related to RDs (ALIBER, 2016)

Consistent with the recommendations of Fernández, Lozano, and Riano (2015), we propose considering four proposals in the political arena:

- Survey Spanish public opinion on a regular basis and assess the needs of people with RDs in order to formulate social policies that respond to those needs.
- Secure the support of national, regional and local governments in the development of comprehensive plans related to their areas of competence.
- Provide training, increase sensitization, and coordinate specialized health and social services that respond to the diverse needs of people with RDs.
- Work towards the necessary coordination and reciprocal support that should exist between the different government agencies and representatives of civil society.

## Conclusion

It is clear that without scientific research, there is no future or hope for the over 7,000 rare diseases currently known. The real challenge for research in rare diseases is to advance

the discovery of treatments and detection of new diseases. It is true that progress has been made (Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo, 2003, 2006; Ministerio de Sanidad y de Política Social, 2009). However, it is also necessary to make progress in communication and in social and educational issues. It is estimated that between 6 and 8% of the world population may be affected by one of these diseases; that is more than 42 million people in Latin America and more than 350 million people worldwide (ALIBER, 2016).

To approach these problems, we need global exposure and coordinated efforts and resources at the local, regional and national levels. These efforts must involve government authorities, professionals, the pharmaceutical industry, the mass media, patient organizations and society in general (Organización Mundial de la Salud [World Health Organization], 2012). Likewise, a multi-faceted strategy is required to respond to the most urgent health problems through prevention, planning, and primary care (Garcia-Ribes, 2006). Social workers are key players in the association movement in Latin America. The increase in the number of associations and foundations in Latin America in recent years has resulted in the need to meet and share experiences, consolidating the Latin American Alliance of Rare Diseases (ALIBER) as a worldwide model.

## References

- ALIBER. (2016). Dossier de la Alianza Iberoamericana de Enfermedades Raras. Retrieved from: [www.aliber.org](http://www.aliber.org).
- Arcos, J. M., Solves, J., & Rius, I. (2016). *Informe sobre el Servicio de Orientación e Información (SIO) de FEDER*. Observatorio de Enfermedades Raras, Madrid.
- Avellaneda, A., Layola, M., Izquierdo, M., Guilera, M., Badía, X. & Ramón, J. R. (2007). Impacto sociosanitario en pacientes con enfermedades raras (estudio ERES). *Medicina Clínica*, 129(17), 656–651.
- Bañón, A. M., & Fornieles, J. (2011). Comunicación y enfermedades raras: Contextualización. En A. M. Bañón et al. (Eds.), *Desafíos y estrategias comunicativas de las Enfermedades Raras. La investigación médica como referente* (pp. 11–40). Valencia: CIBERER.

- Bañón, A. M., & Fornieles, J. (2013). Internacionalización, formación y análisis de la realidad. Tres conceptos esenciales en el desarrollo de acciones positivas por parte de FEDER (Federación Española de Enfermedades Raras). *Revista Española de Discapacidad*, 1(2), 135–141.
- Bañón, A. M., Fornieles, J., Solves, J. A., & Rius, I. (Eds.) (2011). *Desafíos y estrategias comunicativas de las Enfermedades Raras. La investigación médica como referente*. Valencia: CIBERER.
- Bañón, A. M., & Requena, S. (2014). La representación de las enfermedades poco frecuentes en el discurso periodístico español. Propuestas para el análisis. *Sociocultural Pragmatics. An International Journal of Spanish Linguistics*, 2(2), 1–42.
- Borrell-Carrió, F., Suchman, A. L., & Epstein, R. M. (2004). The biopsychosocial model 25 years later: Principles, practice, and scientific inquiry. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 2(6), 576–582.
- Carrión, J., Echandi, L., Bañón, A. M., & Pastor, E. (2015). *FEDER, la fuerza del movimiento asociativo*. Diego Marín, Murcia.
- Comisión Europea. (1999). *Programa de Acción Comunitaria sobre las Enfermedades Poco Comunes*. Decisión nº1295 del 29 de abril de 1999.
- Esteban, G., Ruano, M., Guerra, J. M., & Motero, I. (2015). Conocimientos médicos sobre enfermedades raras por parte de los profesionales de la salud. *Salud(i)Ciencia*, 21, 604–609.
- FEDER. (2009). *Estudio sobre la situación de Necesidades Sociosanitarias de las personas con Enfermedades Raras en España*, Madrid: Caja Madrid.
- Fernández, J. S., Lozano, A., & Riaño, D. (2015). *Políticas sociales y enfermedades poco frecuentes*. Diego Marín, Murcia.
- Fornieles, J., Bañón, A. M., Urán, I., Fernández, M<sup>a</sup>. R., Arcos, J. M., & Ancochea, A. (2014). *Educación y enfermedades poco frecuentes. Análisis y propuestas de trabajo*. Diego Marín, Murcia.
- García-Ribes, M., et al. (2006). Nuevos retos: El médico de familia ante las ‘enfermedades raras.’ *Atención Primaria*, 37(7), 369–370.
- Graf, J. M., & Frank, M. (2015). Rare is frequent and frequent is costly: Rare diseases as a challenge for health care systems. *European Journal of Health Economics*, 16, 113–118.
- Jaeger, G., Røjvik, A. C., & Berglund, B. (2015). Participation in society for people with a rare diagnosis. *Disability and Health Journal*, 8, 44–50.
- Ministerio de Sanidad and Consumo. (2003). *ORDEN SCO/3158/2003, de 7 de noviembre, por la que se crea el Instituto de Investigación de Enfermedades Raras*.
- Ministerio de Sanidad and Consumo. (2006). *Real Decreto 1302/2006, de 10 de noviembre, por el que se establecen las bases del procedimiento para la designación y acreditación de los centros, servicios y unidades de referencia del Sistema Nacional de Salud*.

- Ministerio de Sanidad and Política Social. (2009). *Estrategia en Enfermedades Raras del Sistema Nacional de Salud*. Madrid: Ministerio de Sanidad y Política Social.
- Organización Mundial de la Salud. (2012). Unidos para combatir las enfermedades raras. *Boletín de la Organización Mundial de la Salud*, 90(6), 401–476.
- Palau, F. (2010). Enfermedades raras, un paradigma emergente en la medicina del siglo XXI. *Medicina Clínica*, 134(4), 161–168.
- Pavol, M. (2015). Social participation and health-related quality of life in people with multiple sclerosis. *Disability and Health Journal*, 8, 29–34.
- Pérez de Tudela, N. (2013). Las enfermedades raras, hoy. Ponencia incluida en el VI Congreso Nacional de Enfermedades Raras. Totana (Murcia), 18 de octubre de 2013.
- Posada, M., Martín-Arribas, C., Ramírez, A., Villaverde, A., & Abaitua, A. (2008). Enfermedades raras. Concepto, epidemiología y situación actual en España. *Anales del Sistema Sanitario de Navarra*, 31(2), 9–20.
- Saltonstall, P., & Scott, M. (2013). Hacia una iniciativa multinacional y con objetivos concretos para la concienciación sobre las enfermedades raras. En N. Sireau (Ed.), *Enfermedades raras. Retos y oportunidades para emprendedores sociales* (pp. 6–24). Sheffield: Greenleaf Publishing Limited.
- Solves, J., Bañón, A. M., & Rius, I. (2015). El OBSER como centro impulsor de la investigación social de las enfermedades minoritarias. En Carmen Peñafiel and José Luis Terrón (Eds.), *Estudios de Comunicación y Salud. Innovaciones e información científica para el progreso social* (pp. 131–155). Cuadernos Artesanos de Comunicación, CAC/84, Editorial Sociedad Latina de Comunicación Social, Tenerife.
- Vicente, C. (2011). Sobre algunos mitos del vocabulario técnico: Un traductor advertido vale por dos. *Entreculturas*, 3, 387–397.



# Assisting the Most Vulnerable Populations in the Regions of La Rioja and the Maghreb: The Human Rights-Based Approach and Social Work

Neus Caparrós Civera  
Domingo Carbonero Muñoz  
Esther Raya Díez  
*University of La Rioja, Spain*

*This article examines the evolution of social assistance provided to the most disadvantaged populations in La Rioja, Spain and the Maghreb, going from charity to the human rights-based approach (HRBA). A case-analysis methodology was applied to two social interventions: the ABDEM project, which is part of the EU Tempus program, and the UNICEF program to combat poverty in the Spanish region of La Rioja. In these two cases, the HRBA represents a conceptual leap in the promotion of people's autonomy and an effective means for sustainable progress in response to the inequality, discrimination and unjust power relations negatively affecting the most vulnerable members of society.*

*Keywords: Vulnerability, exclusion, HRBA, social work, social intervention*

## Introduction

Human rights are an underlying principle of professional social work that may be viewed as a means and an end of social intervention with vulnerable individuals and groups. The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual and methodological framework that goes beyond the ideological dimension of social policies and social work practice. The HRBA

redefines the relationship between service providers, recipients of social services, and all agents involved in the social intervention processes. It calls for helping the most disadvantaged by acknowledging that they must not only be service recipients but also active participants in the policy-making process (Gómez, 2011a, 2011b).

The empowerment of citizens requires ensuring the respect, protection and enforcement of their human rights. Governments can accomplish this through legislation and the allocation of the necessary funds to implement laws (UNDP, 2007). Together we must reduce the vulnerability of citizens who are rights-holders, and empower them in order to promote sustainable human and social development. Empowerment should not be understood as a static phenomenon but rather as a dynamic process in which the citizens are the main actors and change agents both individually and as groups (HEGOA, 2006; Titi & Singh, 1995)

Consistent with the prior statements, this article seeks to provide an overview of the HRBA and prior discussions related to it, formulate a working proposal based on the HRBA, and share experiences and provide practical examples of the HRBA. This article is divided into two sections. The first section describes the evolution and theoretical debate related to poverty and vulnerability prior to the emergence of the human rights approach. Special attention is given to the emergence of the welfare state and the appropriateness of viewing the response to human needs as a right. The second section of the article provides a justification for the HRBA within the context of social work and discusses the HRBA in relation to two cases of social intervention.

## The Evolution of Rights for Vulnerable People

The current debate on poverty and human rights can be divided into three distinct stages: the classical stage presents approaches adapted to international contexts and needs-based theories. This first stage coincides with the period prior to the Human Rights Convention of 1948 and with the transition to industrial societies, referenced by functionalist, Marxist and cultural perspectives. Durkheim's (1982, 1995) functionalist theory introduces the concept of anomie, which describes the lack of integration of the labor market and morals. Parsons (1976) and

Merton (1964) built on Durkheim's concept of lack of integration in studies of deviant behavior, intervening institutions and control mechanisms to deal with them.

Marxist theories focus on the relation of the working class with the means of production and the production system. Income and sources of income depend on the various modes of production and the ownership of the means of production (Marx, 1959, pp. 812-818). Engels (1971) specifically linked income to the living conditions of the industrial proletariat characterized by high poverty rates, disease, illiteracy, alcoholism, and child exploitation.

The cultural perspective focuses on society's marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as foreigners or social welfare users, and the effects of gross inequality on the individual and family systems (Harrington, 1962; Lewis, 1970, 1975, 1986; Simmel, 1977, 1998, 1999). The cultural perspective is concerned with deviant behaviors and the development of adaptive norms and behaviors. Simmel, for instance, views being a welfare recipient as an adaptive norm or behavior.

The second stage is associated with the model of citizenship proposed by Marshall (1950), and the political, economic and social rights brought by the emergence of the welfare state in Europe. The citizenship model prevailed in Europe for at least three decades and gave rise to various models of economic and social development. Based on the concepts of commodification and de-familiarization, Esping-Andersen (1993) examined social rights within three types of welfare state regimes: conservative, liberal and social democratic. Taylor-Gooby (2005) in turn, focused on rights at the onset of the welfare state and during the transition to post-industrial societies while differentiating between old and new social risks. Old social risks include unemployment, lack of health care and retirement benefits, while new social risks include work-family imbalance, increasing job insecurity and high unemployment rates for young people. The inability to exercise rights has two foci. First is the concept of deprivation in Anglo-Saxon societies. This concept is concerned with consumption, accommodation, education, the job market, social relationships and participation (Atkinson, Cantillon, Marlier, & Nolan, 2002). Second is the concept of disaffiliation, which explains the breakdown of work and personal relationships, and the lack of mechanisms for integration or inclusion

that in turn provide access to citizenship rights (Castel, 1997; Paugam, 1991, 1993, 2005).

The third stage spans the 1980's and is associated with the development of the capability approach and human needs-based theories. This stage immediately preceded the rise of the HRBA. Sen's (1985, 1992) and Doyal and Gough's (1994) reviews of economic approaches to poverty led to the proposal of a universal approach that provided a new classification of human needs with which to interpret the concept of human development.

The capability approach proposed by Sen (1992) is linked to the HRBA that will be discussed in the next section. This approach views poverty as a complex issue that must be addressed to ensure adequate human functioning in society. The approach also views freedom of expression, dignity, respect and participation in society as essential to well-being.

The needs theory proposed by Doyal and Gough (1994) differentiates between basic and intermediate needs. Physical health represents a key basic need that is essential to human survival and the development of capabilities. The theory proposes that the satisfaction of intermediate needs facilitates meeting basic needs. Although the priority of intermediate needs varies from one society and social group to the next, such needs usually include protective housing, physical security, appropriate health care, adequate nutritional food and clean water, a secure childhood and economic security.

### *The human rights-based approach (HRBA) and vulnerability*

The HRBA builds on welfare state theories and the human needs-based approach. It requires meeting a minimum of conditions to facilitate the development of individual capabilities and satisfy needs. Furthermore, it represents a conceptual leap, given that it views rights as a necessary condition for human development; solidarity is not enough. Thus, the HRBA proposes that our response to social problems should be motivated by our acknowledgement of rights and corresponding obligations and not only by our desire to respond to needs or promote development (Elena, 2011).

In this regard, the Statement of Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approaches adopted by the United Nations in 2003 highlighted the importance of applying HRBA to

programming processes in development cooperation. The aim was to provide a conceptual framework for human development, as well as to “analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress” (UN, 2006, p. 15).

The HRBA is grounded on the principles of entitlement, universality and program planning. It proposes that individuals are born with inalienable human rights simply because they are human beings. At the same time, because of the principles of universality and non-discrimination, it proposes that all individuals must have access to all the processes and benefits of public policies, regardless of their personal attributes (ethnicity, place of residence, etc.). Planning and development by public authorities, in turn, refer to the redistribution of goods and services. Such redistribution must benefit everyone. Vulnerable groups must be identified to ensure that they receive the same assistance as the rest of the population. To this end, we should acknowledge their needs and remove discriminatory barriers that prevent access to available social goods (UNDP, 2007, p. 11).

The HRBA identifies *rights-holders* and their entitlements and the corresponding *duty-bearers* and their obligations (UN, 2006). To this end, the HRBA proposes a three stage analytical model. The first stage involves analyzing the causes of the identified problems. The second stage seeks to identify who is a right-holder and who is a duty-bearer, and identify vulnerable groups and the roles of key players while making sure the rights of all groups are guaranteed consistent with local and international laws. The third stage aims to identify a plan of action in your respective location that empowers rights-holders and enables them to become the main change agents.

All actions associated with the HRBA are aimed at promoting and protecting human rights and for this reason must be guided by the basic principles that define them. Table 1 shows the association between human rights and social work codes of ethics as set forth in the document titled *Principles of Social Work Ethics* adopted by the IFSW General Meeting of 1994. As shown below, HRBA and social work ethical principles overlap. We propose that these principles should guide our interventions.

Table 1. Human rights principles and related  
*Principles of Social Work Ethics*

Principle	Description	Ethics of Social Work Principles
Universality and inalienability	All people everywhere in the world are entitled to human rights.	2.2.1 Every human being has unique value, which justifies moral consideration for that person.
Indivisibility	All rights have equal status and cannot be ranked in a hierarchical order.	2.2.2 Each individual has the right to self-fulfillment to the extent that it does not encroach upon the same right of others, and has an obligation to contribute to the well-being of society.
Inter-dependence and inter-relatedness	In certain circumstances, benefiting from a right may depend on benefitting from other rights.	2.2.3 Each society, regardless of its form, should function to provide the maximum benefits for all of its members.
Equality and non-discrimination	All individuals are equal and are entitled to their human rights without discrimination.	2.2.6 Social workers are expected to provide the best possible assistance to anybody seeking their help and advice, without unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, color, social class, race, religion, language, political beliefs, or sexual orientation.
Participation and inclusion	All persons and peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation and to contribute to and enjoy development.	2.2.10 Social workers generally expect clients to take responsibility, in collaboration with them, for determining courses of action affecting their lives. Compulsion which might be necessary to solve one party's problems at the expense of the interests of others involved should only take place after careful explicit evaluation of the claims of the conflicting parties. Social workers should minimize the use of legal compulsion. 2.2.11 Social work is inconsistent with direct or indirect support of individuals, groups, political forces or power-structures suppressing their fellow human beings by employing terrorism, torture or similar brutal means.
Accountability and rule of law	States and other duty-holders are accountable for the observance of human rights	2.2.12 Social workers make ethically justified decisions, and stand by them, paying due regard to the IFSW International Declaration of Ethical Principles, and to the International Ethical Standards for Social Workers adopted by their national professional association.

Source: Caparrós & Raya (2016, pp. 306-307) and UNDP (2007, p. 15)

*Research methodology: case analysis*

Case analysis represents a commonly used method in social science research due to its usefulness in generating practical knowledge. Several authors support the use of this method (Campbell, 1975; Chetty, 1996; Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006; Martínez, 2006; Perry, 1998; Yin, 1994) as it allows for the contextualization of knowledge related to social phenomena and the in-depth exploration of identified problems. In the pages that follow, we will analyze two cases: children in the La Rioja region of northern Spain and the ABDEM Project in the Maghreb. These two regions have been the object of HRBA programs of study implemented by European and African institutions of higher education.

Case study analyses are delimited by the environment in which research takes place to produce specific and practical knowledge (Campbell & Stanley 1966; Ragin, 1992). The value of this method stems from the presentation of cases and their connection to elements of real life. Given their proximity to the context in which they operate, real details and problems can be detected and observed (Kish, 1987). The cases we have selected make it possible for us to thoroughly study the practical application of HRBA in two areas of social work research. Our case analysis does not seek to generalize or compare findings, but rather to provide clear examples of the potential of applying HRBA in social work, both as a means and an end (Bourdieu, 1977; Christensen, 1987; Cragg, 1940; Flyvbjerg, 2001).

The chosen cases are appropriate for the goal of this article, which is to provide useful examples of the HRBA in social work as a strategy to empower subjects of interventions as opposed to providing them with charity or assistance.

The first case is the ABDEM project (French acronym for *Introduction de l'approche basée sur les droits de l'homme dans l'enseignement supérieur au Magreb*). This project, funded by the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) program of the European Commission's IV TEMPUS, seeks to introduce the HRBA to higher education institutions in the Maghreb.

The Maghreb refers to the northern region of the African continent. It is a geopolitical term, referring to the region bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Atlantic Ocean



to the West, and the Sahara Desert to the south. It includes the countries of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.

The countries participating in the project experience very diverse and complex social and economic realities. Their economies are based on agriculture, industry, tourism and/or oil revenues. At the same time, they share Islam as a common religion and Arabic as a common language. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), these countries experience medium to low levels of development. In 2015, Algeria ranked 83, Libya 94, Morocco 126, Tunisia 96 and Mauritania 156 out of a total of 188 countries in terms of their level of development. Their reported expected years of schooling are 8.5 for Mauritania, 14.6 for Tunisia, 11.6 for Morocco and 14 for Algeria and Libya. Because of this, these countries were considered good candidates for participating in a program that seeks to provide support and assistance, and promote cooperation and democratic reforms (UNDP, 2015).

The second case revolves around a research study sponsored by the Spanish Committee of UNICEF to analyze children's rights in all regions of Spain. Such study seeks information about the various types of rights we will discuss in the following section. We have focused on the region of La Rioja, Spain due to the features it shares with the rest of Spain and because of its location in one of Spain's most developed economic areas. Furthermore, La Rioja has one of the lowest rates of exclusion in the country according to the "At Risk of Poverty and/or Exclusion" (AROPE) classification (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2016).

La Rioja is an autonomous community of Spain, one of the 28 countries that make up the European Union. La Rioja is located in the north of the Iberian Peninsula and comprising part of the Ebro Valley to the north and the Iberian mountain range to the south. This autonomous community comprises only one province, which is subdivided into three sub-regions: the Rioja Alta, the Rioja Media and the Rioja Baja. The region has a population of 317,053 inhabitants. The population demographics are as follows: 15.8% are children under the age of 16, 64.7% of the population is aged 16 to 64 years old and 19.4% is over 65. La Rioja has a moderate population density with 63 inhabitants per square kilometer. This makes it the 6th most dense autonomous

region in Spain (Anuario Estadístico de la Comunidad Autónoma de La Rioja, 2015).

It is important to highlight that the cases analyzed in this article are not intended to test hypotheses, given that ours is not a deductive research study with an experimental or quasi-experimental design. These are only intended to illustrate the feasibility of applying the HBRA to different contexts. Both cases provide a detailed description of the most interesting aspects of both experiences (Flyvberg, 1998; Geertz, 1973; Kish, 1987; Ragin, 1992).

The aim of the ABDEM project is to train future university graduates to use HRBA in their professional practice. In this case, the vulnerable population comprises all individuals whose human rights are not sufficiently guaranteed. On the other hand, the study of children in La Rioja focuses on high risk or highly vulnerable minors. These include children living in poverty, children who come from broken homes, and those living in rural areas with little access to cultural and educational resources (see Table 6 in the Appendix for figures). Finally, both cases provide detailed information on aspects of interest with regard to the application of the HRBA, as described in the following section.

The HRBA as a means in higher education. The ABDEM Project

The ABDEM Project aims to integrate the HRBA into higher education given the importance of strengthening and reinforcing training in human rights in university settings. Education on human rights is viewed as a means for human, economic and social development. The World Program for Education on Human Rights, and specifically the Action Plan for the second stage (2010-2014) aimed at Higher Education serve as the conceptual and methodological framework for this project

The project is divided into three stages:

- First stage—An analysis was performed on the status of human rights in the universities and countries participating in the project.
- Second stage—A training program was proposed for university professors from various disciplines (education, communication, law and social work).

- Third stage—The creation of an inter-university and interdisciplinary master’s degree in human rights and public policy was proposed.

Participating institutions of higher education in Europe include: the Spanish universities of La Rioja, Zaragoza, Extremadura and La Coruña; Bergamo University in Italy, and the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom. Participating universities in the Maghreb include: the Mohamed V Souissi and Hassan II Mohammed universities in Morocco; the University of Setif and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Sciences Politiques of Algeria; and the Institut National du Travail et des Etudes Sociales, the Institut de Presse et Sciences de l’information and the Université de la Manouba of Tunisia. Meetings, seminars and courses were held throughout the project at the various participating universities, and information was exchanged through a custom-designed online platform.

Table 2. Indicators. Stage I ABDEM Project

Structure of the table of indicators for evaluating the HRBA in Higher Education					
Dimensions/Scope	Core Idea I	Core Idea II	Core Idea III	Core Idea IV	Core Idea V
	Connected policies and application measures	Teaching learning processes & instruments	Research	Learning context	Training and professional development of higher education teaching personnel
Dimension 1: Human Rights in Higher Education	How rights are observed in education policies	How rights are observed in the development of teaching activities	How rights are observed in research activities	How rights are observed in the learning environment	How knowledge of human rights is promoted and teachers’ rights are observed
Dimension 2: Human Rights through Higher Education	How education policies promote education on human rights	The processes and instruments for teaching rights	Presence and scope of research on human rights	How the learning environment benefits the understanding of rights	How teachers are taught to teach rights

Source: The authors

During the first stage, analyzes were conducted about how each university addresses the issue of human rights. Custom-designed tools were developed taking into account two dimensions and five core ideas, as shown in Table 2.

This initial analysis served as a draft for a subsequent SWOT analysis conducted in preparation for the implementation of the HRBA in higher education. The following are key findings of this analysis pertaining to participating European and North African universities:

- Scarce presence of HRBA in higher education programs.
- Need to integrate human rights with teaching approaches and the university's mission in general.
- Need to include HRBA statements in external and internal university regulations.
- HRBA must be present not only in social science degree programs, but in all university degree programs.
- The autonomy of each university should facilitate advances of the HRBA.
- In the case of Europe, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reform facilitates the revision of the HRBA.
- In the case of Africa, there is a need to create entities that will work to implement the HRBA.

The second phase of the project focuses on training professors according to the United Nations World Program for Human Rights Education. Such program underlines the need to include training on human rights as part of the faculty hiring criteria. Unfortunately, this criterion is rarely taken into consideration or valued by hiring universities.

Human rights training is especially important in social work as a distinctive feature of professional intervention. For this reason, future social workers should undergo solid training in human rights as a sign of commitment to their own discipline.

Lastly, in the third stage (currently underway) the content of the Master's Degree in Human Rights is being designed. The main content areas are: Section 1—Skills-based learning; Section 2—Human rights-based approach; Section 3—Service learning.

Within the framework of higher education on human rights, both trainers and trainees must be able to:

- Know what human rights are and what those rights mean in their respective professional fields.
- Acquire and/or strengthen skills and competencies to effectively promote respect for and support of human rights in different settings and situations.
- Be aware of the importance of attitudes and behaviors aimed at promoting and protecting the human rights of the objects of their interventions.

General and specific competencies for trainers:

- Teamwork: Be engaged and actively collaborate in the achievement of common goals with other people, areas and organizations.
- Work in international contexts: Utilize a psychosocial perspective when dealing with critical situations and maintain a balanced physical and mental state that will enable them to continue working effectively.
- Interpersonal communication: Interact with other people in a positive way while engaging in empathetic listening, ensuring the clear and assertive expression of thoughts and/or feelings, and paying attention to verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Appreciate diversity and multiculturalism: Understand and accept social and cultural diversity as a factor leading to personal and collective enrichment. Also

understand that life without discrimination on the grounds of sex, age, religion, social condition, politics and/or ethnicity will enhance people's coexistence.

- Critical reasoning: Evaluate the consistency of definitions, especially those assumed to be true by society and the immediate context of the person.
- Ethics and commitment: Move towards one's own or someone else's moral good (in other words, towards everything that is or means a good, meaningful life, personal fulfilment and sense of justice) and persevere in this moral good.

The United Nations World Program for Human Rights Education anticipates that the approved participating teachers will recognize the educational potential of the previously described competencies.

Given the goal of integrating human rights in teaching practices and planning processes, guidance is necessary to implement human rights in various contexts. These are part of the professional challenges and interests of participating teachers. HRBA as an end while working with vulnerable populations. The UNICEF study

Adopting a human rights-based approach in research targeting vulnerable populations requires focusing on international laws and regulations given that these provide a framework for comparative analysis. The study conducted about children in La Rioja is based on this premise. Because of this, the University of La Rioja and UNICEF entered into a collaboration agreement in 2015.

The purpose of the project was to explore the situation of children rights and child welfare policies in La Rioja. The study relied on the foundation laid by the Convention on Children's Rights (CRC); Observations of the Spanish Government Committee reviewing the CRC report of October 2010, and other reports related to child welfare in Spain dating from 2010.

These reports were compared to secondary sources of data such as statistics, activity reports, regulations, etc., published by other institutions and government agencies working with

children. Table 3 shows a summary of this project’s areas of study and the CRC report used as reference in this article. Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 summarize the stages and findings of this study.

Table 3. Areas of Study

Area	CRC Article	Content Related to Rights
Right to Participation	12	Right to express their opinion and that this opinion be taken into consideration in all matters affecting them
Right to Health	24	Right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. State Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.
Right to an Adequate ment, Standard of Living	27	Right to enjoy a standard of living adequate for their develop-  and it is the parent(s) primary responsibility to secure this development. It is the State's obligation to take all appropriate measures to secure that this responsibility can be fulfilled and that it is assumed, if necessary, by payment of child support.
Right to Education	28	Right to education with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.
Right to participate in cultural life	31	Right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and to recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Source: The authors based on CRC



Table 4. Stages, Activities and Goals Pursued in the ABDEM Project

Stage	Activity	Objective	Participants	Main Center	Date
Working seminar Stage I	Exploratory meeting	Establish the basis of the project on the HRBA in higher education	U. La Rioja U. Extremadura U. A Coruña U. Zaragoza	Extremadura	September 2014
Working seminar Stage I	Meetings Debate sessions	Define the tool for evaluating human rights in higher education (indicators and dimensions)	U. La Rioja U. Extremadura U. A Coruña U. Zaragoza U. Westminster U. Bergamo U. Mohamed V	University of Logroño	December 2014
	Conference —Discussion	Present results Stage I beginning of Stage II	Souissi, U. Hassan II Mohammed-Casablanca Setif 2,	Setif. Algeria	March 2015
	Working seminar	Design stage II, goals, content, methodology and schedule	Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Sciences Politiques Institut National du Travail et des Etudes Sociales, Institut de presse et Sciences de l'information Université de la Manouba	Madrid	May 2015
Stage II	Discussion	Presentation of contents of the training program		London	October 2015
	Training Day	Training the Trainers. Section: Training in competences	University of La Rioja Universities of the Maghreb	Rabat	January 2016
	Training day	Training the Trainers. Section: Human Rights in Higher Education	University of La Rioja Universities of Maghreb	Setif	March 2016
	Training the Trainers Section 3: Learning Service	Universities of Maghreb	University of La Rioja Universities of Maghreb	Tunisia	October 2016
Stage III	Preparatory meeting	Design of the inter-university master's degree	European universities	Madrid	July 2016
	Discussion	Training university teaching staff in human rights	Full Consortium	Tunisia	October 2016

Source: The authors based on the project design

Table 5. Stages of the research, techniques, and results achieved during the research

Research Stage	Methods	Findings		Data Sources
First stage of research: review of secondary data sources	Review of secondary data sources related to the HRBA	The context of La Rioja	321,173 inhabitants in the region. 44,404 people born outside of Spain accounting for 13.8% of the population 56,056 people under 18 years old (17.5%) 46,151 people under 18 years old, born in Spain (16.6%) 10,354 people under 18 years old, born in La Rioja (23.4%)	Municipal Electoral Register at 1st January 2013 Population Census 2011
			24.4% of homes at risk of poverty, 31.8% of the homes comprising two adults with children and 26.7% of other homes with children	Life Conditions Survey 2013
			The Basque Country and La Rioja region have made the fewest cutbacks in spending for children	Data from the general directorate of social services of the Government of La Rioja, as of 2013
			Reduction in the rate of maternity and paternity benefits (-9.97%), leave to take care of a family member (-25.01%), caring for own children (29.71%)	Information on benefits for leave to take care of a family member, child, maternity and paternity leave provided by the National Institute of Statistics
			Budget cutbacks for child-related policies from €3,876,018 to €3,636,273 between 2011 and 2014	Annual regional budget
				Review of regional regulations on matters of children

Research Stage	Methods	Findings		Data Sources
		Right to a proper standard of living	Poverty rate: 20.1% Childhood poverty rate: 26.1%	Life Conditions Survey 2013 and 2014
			Increase in job inactivity between 2009 and 2014	Survey on Active Population I T. 2002-2014
		Right to education	Increase in the number of students in general education from 47.52 to 54.97	Source: School Statistics of the Region of La Rioja. Government of La Rioja General Directorate for Education
			Lack of universal school enrolment for children under 3. Only 24.6% of two-year-olds are in school. Rates above 90% in school enrolment of children between 3 and 17 years old	Source: National Institute of Educational Evaluation. National System of Education Indicators 2014 Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2014
			Results in math, science and reading skills above the Spanish average	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. PISA results (INCE, 2013)
		Right to health	Scarce care to children: only one mental health unit specializing in children for the entire region	La Rioja Health Services, 2008; Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2012
			Increase in psychiatric disorders and their prevalence in children	First Mental Health Plan for La Rioja, 2010
			Widespread consumption of alcohol and tobacco, with 91.9% consuming both substances	Regional survey on drug use and habits

Source: Authors based on the project design

Table 6. Methods, findings, recommendations and participants associated with the second stage of research

Research Stage	Methods	Findings/Recommendations	Participants
Second stage of the research, qualitative fieldwork	Preparatory work by research team	1. Adapt the HRBA to childhood problems in La Rioja. 2. Compilation of data and regulations pertaining to children in La Rioja. 3. Design research method	Researchers of UNESCO, Chair of Human Rights and regional committee on childhood
	First discussion group: diagnosis and illustration of cases with entities working with children	1. Identification of social cases related to forms of violence against children. Examples: Victims and/or perpetrators of crimes in family conflicts; Violence towards adults: child-parent violence. 2. Identification of social cases with schooling deficits. Need to ensure quality education through redistribution of students in several schools; added protocols for absenteeism, support materials and promote personal development. 3. Identification of cases where the economic crisis has affected child integration 4. Identification of cases related to the management of cultural diversity and commonalities. 5. Identification of cases of discrimination or cultural/ethnic segregation; integration problems for children with disabilities	La Rioja Child Welfare Association (Asociación Pro Infancia Riojana); La Rioja Association against Drug Addiction (Asociación Riojana para la atención a personas con problemas de drogas); Pioneer Foundation Family Point of Encounter (Fundación PIONEROS, Punto de Encuentro Familiar), Red Cross, Family Assistance Service and Minors Group of the National Police (SAF; GRUME); and staff from the Logroño Town Hall and of the Regional Government of La Rioja, General Directorates of Social Services
	Second discussion group with entities working with children: evaluation and intervention proposals	1. Invest the necessary <i>economic resources</i> to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination of boys and girls, especially in the areas of education, health and social services, and protection of children. 2. Improve coordination between the agents involved in providing assistance to children and the generation of shared knowledge. 3. Ensure equal opportunities to access the <i>right to education</i> , and adopt specific measures to promote academic success. 4. Promote and improve the regional protection system for children, within the scope of youth justice, prevention, foster families, vulnerability and assistance overcoming all types of violence	

Source: Authors based on the project design

Table 7. Methods, findings, and participants associated with the third stage of research

Research Stage	Methods	Findings	Participants
Third stage: quantitative field work on children's right to participation	Exploratory survey using a semi-structured questionnaire	Lack of awareness of children's rights in general and of the right to participation in particular	Students (215) from various grades aged 10 to 16 years old

Source: Authors based on the project design

UNICEF made recommendations to duty-bearers based on the principles set forth in the CRC and other applicable regulations. These are summarized below:

- Invest the necessary *economic resources* to guarantee equal opportunities and non-discrimination of boys and girls, especially in education, health care and social services. Spending on children should be closer to the European average.
- Develop mechanisms to improve *coordination* between all government agencies responsible for children services in La Rioja region. Assistance to the most vulnerable children requires coordinated collective action.
- Ensure equal *educational opportunities* and adopt specific measures to promote academic success.
- Improve the entire *child protection system* in the La Rioja autonomous community by increasing investment in human, economic and program resources.
- Promote the *right to participation* and citizen empowerment for boys and girls, through strategies that enable them to participate in all matters affecting them.

## Conclusion

Social intervention on behalf of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged has evolved throughout Spanish history. One of the most recent developments of this evolution has been the move towards a human rights approach that focuses on outcomes and the strategies to achieve such outcomes. This development took place in the 20th century.

This article presented two experiences in which the HRBA was applied in social work practice. The findings of the ABDEM project highlight the need to think of higher education as an important means for change available to the population, and not as a sacred depository of knowledge that is isolated from society. From a micro perspective, social work professors should take advantage of their academic freedom to promote engagement with the surrounding socio-political environment. From a macro perspective, we should identify the rights-holders and duty-bearers in situations of rights violations in order to propose pertinent interventions, consistent with the human rights approach.

The use of the HRBA in the UNICEF study of children in La Rioja permitted identifying problems and making recommendations for duty-bearers about policies related to child welfare to guarantee equal opportunities and non-discrimination, the creation of service delivery systems, and uphold participation rights, among others.

The HRBA views people as change agents who participate in their own development and not as simple passive welfare recipients. For this reason, it is essential to inform, educate and empower them. Their participation is key to the HRBA, not only to guarantee their rights, but also to maintain progress (UNDP, 2010, 2015). For this reason, the implementation of social interventions based on the HRBA should consider the following considerations:

- Policies and programs should revolve around human rights.
- We should identify rights-holders and their entitlements as well as duty-bearers and their obligations.

- We should empower rights-holders and hold duty-bearers accountable.
- The principles and rules related to international human rights treaties should guide the entire social intervention process.

This perspective places citizens at the heart of interventions, not only as recipients but as active agents for change and as key players who must make decisions, file claims, and defend particular rights (Gomez, 2011). This way, the beneficiaries of public policies and programs cease to be mere service recipients and become actively involved in their personal and social development. The HRBA proposes that social workers should not simply focus on processing applications for benefits but also work towards the empowerment of vulnerable groups. The ABDEM project addressed this recommendation through the training of employers of future university graduates in the Maghreb to focus on various dimensions of the HRBA and its implications for working with vulnerable populations. The study of children in La Rioja, on the other hand, revealed the vulnerability of various children subgroups. Findings serve to inform medium-term policies related to autonomy, personal development, and the social inclusion of disadvantaged minors.

The application of the HRBA to the analysis of social problems and social interventions constitutes a significant change influencing the actions taken, problem analysis, project identification, methodologies, and social development. The HRBA is consistent with international human rights law, which promotes the self-determination of all individuals and peoples. This includes their right to participate in the civic, economic, social and political decisions that affect their lives (Elena, 2011).



## References

- Anuario Estadístico de la Comunidad Autónoma de La Rioja. (2015). *La Rioja en Cifras*. Logroño: Consejería de Administración Pública y Hacienda, Instituto de Estadística de La Rioja.
- Atkinson, A., Cantillon, B., Marlier, P., & Nolan, T. (2002). *Social indicators. The EU and Social Inclusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, D., & Stanley, J. (1966). *Experimental and quasiexperimental designs for research*. Chicago, IL: Rand Macnally & Company.
- Campbell, D. (1975). Degrees of freedom and the case study. *Comparative Political Studies*, 8(1), 178–191.
- Caparros, N., & Raya, E. (2016). Enfoque basado en derechos humanos, trabajo social y menores vulnerables. In E. Raya and E. Pastor (Eds.), *Trabajo social, derechos humanos e innovación social* (pp. 301–317). University of La Rioja and Thompson Reuters Aranzadi: Pamplona.
- Castel, R. (1997). *La metamorfosis de la cuestión social: Una crónica del asalariado*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Chetty, S. (1996). The case study method for research in small- and medium-sized firms. *International Small Business Journal*, 5, October–December, pp. 73–85.
- Christensen, C. R. (Ed.). (1987). *Teaching and the case method*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Cragg, C. I. (1940). Because wisdom can't be told. *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, 5(451), 1–6.
- Doyal, I., & Gough, I. (1994). *A theory of human need*. New York: Guilford.
- Durkheim, E. (1982). *The rules of the sociological method*. London: Macmillan.
- Durkheim, E. (1995). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. New York: Free Press.
- Elena, D. L. (2011). Enfoque basado en derechos humanos y perspectiva de género. *Documentación Social*, 227\*240.
- Engels, F. (1971). *The condition of the working-class in England*. Moscow: Progress Publisher.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1993). *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (1998). *Rationality and power: Democracy in practice*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Quality Inquiry*, 12(2), pp. 219–245.

- Geertz, C. (1973). Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 441–453). New York: Basic Books.
- Gómez, M. (2011a). El enfoque basado en Derechos Humanos: Evaluación e indicadores. Madrid: CIDEAL.
- Gómez, M. (2011b). *Los derechos humanos y desarrollo: Hacia un camino compartido*. Madrid: CIDEAL.
- Harrington, M. (1962). *The other America: Poverty in the United States*. The Macmillan Company.
- HEGOA. (2006). *Diccionario de acción humanitaria y cooperación al desarrollo*. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Tabla.htm?t=10011&L=0>
- Kish, J. (1987). *Statistical design for research*. New York: Wiley.
- Lewis, O. (1970). *Pedro Martínez: Un campesino mexicano y su familia*. México: Mortiz.
- Lewis, O. (1975). *La vida: Una familia puertorriqueña en la cultura de la pobreza: San Juan y Nueva York*. México: Joaquín Mortiz.
- Lewis, O. (1986). *Los hijos de Sánchez*. México: Grijalbo.
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and social class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martínez, P. C. (2006). El método de estudio de caso. Estrategia metodológica de investigación científica, en *Pensamiento y Gestión*, nº 20, 165–193.
- Marx, K. (1959). *Capital*. New York: International Publishers.
- Merton, K. (1964). *Teoría y Estructura Social*. Madrid. Fondo de Cultura Económica, Madrid.
- Parsons, T. (1976). *La conducta desviada y los mecanismos de control social*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente.
- Paugam, S. (1991). *La société française et ses pauvres*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), Recherches Politiques.
- Paugam, S. (1993). *La disqualification sociale. Essai sur la nouvelle pauvreté*. Paris: Presses de France (PUF).
- Paugam, S. (2005). *Les formes élémentaires de la pauvreté*, ED. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Perry, C. (1998). Processes of a case study methodology for postgraduate research in marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(9/10), 785–802.
- Ragin, C. C. (1992). Casing and the process of social inquiry. In C. C. Ragin, and H. S. Becker (Eds.), *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry* (pp. 217–226). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, A. (1985). A sociological approach to the measurement of poverty: A reply to Professor Peter Townsend. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 37, 669–676.

- Sen, A. (1992). *Nuevo examen de la desigualdad*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Simmel, G. (1977). Digresión sobre el extranjero. *En Estudios sobre las formas de socialización*, vol. II. Biblioteca de la Revista de Occidente. Madrid.
- Simmel, G. (1998). *Les Pauvres*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Simmel, G. (1999). *Sociologie. Études sur les formes de la socialisation*. Paris: Quadrige. Grands Textes.
- Taylor-Gooby, P. (2005). *New risk. New welfare. The transformation of the European welfare state*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Titi, V., & Singh, N. (1995). *Empowerment for sustainable development: Towards sustainable development*. New York: Zed Book.
- United Nations. (2006). *Frequently asked questions on a human rights-based approach to development cooperation*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2007). *Operationalizing human rights-based approaches to poverty reduction*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2010). *A human right based approach to programming*. Harvard: Harvard School of Public Health. UNPF. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/es/node/8599>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2015). *Human development report 2015. Work for Human Development*. New York: United Nations.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research—Design and methods, Applied social research methods* (Vol. 5, 2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

# Social Work and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities in Mexico: Hidden Barriers

María del Carmen Martín Cano  
*University of Jaén, Spain*

Yolanda María de la Fuente Robles  
*International University of Andalucía*

*This article proposes that a thorough understanding of the concept of diversity should facilitate the full inclusion of all people in society. Furthermore, it proposes that we should look at diversity and inclusion from a community perspective. Consistent with these premises, Mexico has recently taken a significant leap forward by developing programs to serve functionally diverse people. Most significantly, the federal government has created the National Program for the Wellbeing and Development of People with Disabilities that is sponsored by the executive branch of government. The creation of this program followed the dissemination by the National System for the Integral Development of Families, of the work conducted by the National Board for the Development and Inclusion of People with Disabilities (CONADIS, in Spanish), the Advisory Council for the People with Disabilities, other civic organizations, and people with disabilities and their families. The authors conclude that, in spite of the considerable progress observed, there are still invisible or hidden barriers to a full social integration of persons with disabilities.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Development, Inclusion, Social Work, Functional Disability, Accessibility*

## Introduction

From a social perspective, the goal of “diversity” entails the complete integration of citizens in all spheres of society. According to Coria (2010), the only thing differentiating each social group should be the way they manage their respective social limitations as they work to achieve their rights.

Given the special needs of persons with disabilities in advanced societies, responses to those needs must follow a community perspective, since these affect society as a whole and require collective action. Human service professionals, in particular, should engage in individual, family, organizational and community-level actions in an effort to overcome problems and promote social inclusion (Fernández & López-Peláez, 2008). Our social interventions should seek to increase social access for all citizens. Specific goals could include increasing social cohesion and equality, and improving geographic distribution and economic disparities. This would facilitate enhancing social service delivery and providing employment, economic, cultural and social activities (Cabrero, Trejo, & Fernández, 2011).

Human service professions in general, and social work in particular, confront unique challenges that must be addressed in professional degree programs as they prepare persons for the workforce. These challenges are associated with social, economic, technological and cultural changes, and respond to social problems created by economic globalization and new information and communication technologies (Hernández, De la Fuente, & Campo, 2014). Technological innovation results from continuous scientific discovery and invention. These, in turn, produce changes in the social structure and present new challenges to social intervention. This situation calls for a new set of professional skills and competencies (De la Fuente, 2009).

### *Conceptual framework*

The concept of accessibility is rather ambiguous, given that its definition is usually tied to the context in which it is used. Etymologically, the word is related to the adjective “accessible” and the suffix “-bility,” which denotes “quality of” or “pertaining to” (Real Academia Española [RAE], 2016). When talking about accessibility, we inevitably think about adaptive

materials and equipment such as ramps, supportive gear, and people with limited mobility, given their physical disabilities and the nature of their surroundings. Nonetheless, this term deserves a broader definition to fit its socio-cultural contexts.

Approaches to accessibility in Mexico have evolved through the last decade into new concepts and approaches such as “Design for Everyone,” “Universal Design” and “Universal Accessibility” (De la Fuente, Martín, & Hernández, 2016). Consistent with this, article 9 of the Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities of 2006 asserted that the state must intervene to guarantee equal access to physical surroundings, transportation, information and communication technologies, and public facilities, spaces and services to enable people with disabilities to live independent full lives. Government actions seeking the identification and elimination of barriers, should apply to: (a) buildings, roads, transportation and navigation, lakes and outdoor facilities such as schools, homes, medical facilities and other workplaces; and (b) information, communication and other services, including electronic and emergency services (Hernández et al., 2014).

The legal profession has made significant contributions to advancing “Universal Access” and “Design for Everyone” through the creation of compensatory measures such as positive action, reverse discrimination and compulsory adjustments. It has also produced transcending principles such as non-discrimination, life independence, civil dialogue, and transversality of policies concerning human diversity. These concepts and related principles reinforce and broaden social rights, and should enable us to overcome invisible or hidden barriers as part of a new paradigm of social accessibility. As part of this new paradigm, we keep persons with disabilities in mind, but more importantly, we will keep in mind society and the relationship of every individual with their surroundings. This dynamic conception of diversity is expected to foster the creation of a fully inclusive society where diversity is viewed as an intrinsic aspect of democratic life (CRUE, 2014).

### *Accessibility Guidelines in Mexico*

According to the World Report on Disabilities, over a billion people, slightly over 15 percent of the world’s population,

suffers from some type of disability (PRONADDIS, 2009–2012). Furthermore, the World Health Survey (OMS, 2011) reports that almost 200 million people in the world endure serious difficulties in their daily lives. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, disabilities will become an even more serious issue in the near future. Reportedly, the prevalence of disabilities is increasing due to the aging of the world's population and related increases of chronic diseases such as mental illness, diabetes, heart conditions and cancer (OMS, 2011).

We do not have an accurate estimate of the extent of disabilities in Mexico. Nevertheless, according to the 12th General Population and Housing Census conducted in 2000 (National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information Technologies, 2001) and the National Survey on Performance Evaluation conducted in 2003 by the Department of Health, about 9.7 million people suffer from some type of disability in the country (PRONADDIS, 2009–2012). Other sources report that a considerable percentage of the Mexican population with disabilities are also victims of discrimination and poverty. An estimated 60 percent of people with disabilities fall well below the national median for income. This demonstrates the vulnerability of this social group (PRONADDIS 2009–2012). At the same time, the Mexican population is aging at a fast rate. The projection is that the elderly in Mexico will represent 28 percent of the population by the year 2050 (Partida, 2006).

Mexico's rapidly aging population is expected to eventually overwhelm the country's healthcare and housing systems, given the associations between economic dependency, poor health and disabilities among the elderly. According to Hernández and De la Fuente (2016), in the year 2000, the National Population Board for the first time provided information about population subgroups suffering from any type of physical or mental limitation. The prevalence of these conditions increases the risk of developing disabilities, particularly for the elderly. For this reason, Mexican policy makers should thoroughly analyze this situation and try to respond to the needs of the increasing number of economically dependent and ill elderly persons in the country.

According to ENADIS (2010), Mexico's National Survey on Discrimination reported that more than 7 out of 10 Mexicans believe that the rights of people with disabilities are not being



fully protected. Furthermore, 19.1 percent of people with disabilities completing the survey reported not having enough income to meet their basic needs. Almost 39 percent of persons with disabilities receive income from employment, 78 percent of them have difficulties with access to government support, and only 33 percent report that they receive the healthcare they need. In summary, people with disabilities reported their greatest problems are unemployment, discrimination, problems with self-sufficiency and lack of access to government support (ENADIS, 2010).

### *Legal framework*

Mexico ratified and signed the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 13, 2006. Article 4 of this international treaty establishes the obligation to: undertake or foster research and development, and promote the availability and use of new technologies, including information and communication technologies, mobility assistance, technical devices and support technologies for people with disabilities, prioritizing those that are more affordable (UN, 2006). Likewise, article 9, concerning accessibility, states that:

[...] State parties shall undertake the appropriate measures to ensure access to people with disabilities, in equal conditions, to the physical environment, transport, information and communications and to other public services and facilities, both in urban and rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers, will be applied—among other things—to [...] information, communication and services of other kinds, including electronic and emergency services (UN, 2006).

The National Program for the Development of People with Disabilities was created as part of the implementation of the General Law for People with Disabilities and in collaboration with the National Board for People with Disabilities. This program follows the guidelines provided by the United Nations and is part of the nation's commitment to fight for equality of rights and opportunities for people with disabilities (CONADIS,

in Spanish). The program aims at promoting the development and full inclusion of this population subgroup. It also seeks a cultural shift to fight discrimination and move from welfare assistance policies to policies that focus on human rights.

Subsequently, the 2014–2018 National Program for the Development and Inclusion of People with Disabilities was sanctioned, consistent with the guidelines of the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the 2007–2012 National Plan for Development (Dirección General de Derechos Humanos y Democracia [General Directorate of Human Rights and Democracy], 2014). This program has six basic objectives that go beyond assessing the needs of people with disabilities in the country. These objectives are:

- Incorporate the rights of people with disabilities into government policies and programs.
- Increase access of people with disabilities to general and specialized health services.
- Design and develop programs to increase access to quality jobs for people with disabilities in coordination with the Department of Labor and Social Forecast.
- Promote inclusion of people with disabilities in special education, sports culture and tourism.
- Increase their accessibility to public and private spaces, transportation, and information technologies.
- Promote legislation aimed at providing people with disabilities with greater justice and political and public participation (Dirección General de Derechos Humanos y Democracia [General Directorate of Human Rights and Democracy], 2014).

#### *Current situation: progress and hidden barriers*

Significant progress has been made in Mexico in the creation of programs for people with disabilities. Particularly significant was the creation of the National Program for the Wellbeing and

the Incorporation to Development of People with Disabilities, implemented by the executive branch of the federal government. This program was the result of joint efforts by federal and state government agencies, organizations of people with disabilities, and academicians following reports published by the National System for the Integral Development of Families (DIF, in Spanish) (PRONADDIS 2009-2014). Consistent with the guidelines provided by the National Program for the Wellbeing and the Incorporation to Development of People with Disabilities, the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS, in Spanish) is promoting cultural dignity, tolerance for people with disabilities, and the principles of equality, equity and development (De la Fuente et al., 2016). Nevertheless, in spite of the progress made, we must continue to detect and identify hidden barriers to full social integration. To this end, we must guarantee physical and social accessibility to people with disabilities so they can enjoy a full social life. Mexican authorities should focus on the promotion of full social participation for functionally diverse people, consistent with the recommendations of the World Health Organization. The resulting new paradigm will no longer focus on individuals with health conditions or who are functionally diverse. Instead, it will focus on social contexts and disabling surroundings that generate and perpetuate exclusion (Diaz, 2010).

The existing urban-architectural spaces in the City of Mexico and its surrounding Metropolitan Area present physical barriers leading to the exclusion of persons with disabilities (De la Fuente et al., 2016). While many Mexican citizens are aware of barriers in each community and city of the City of Mexico Metropolitan Area, unfortunately this awareness has not led to plan for access in urban or suburban development projects. As a result, many Mexican suburban communities have emerged without properly addressing the issue of accessibility. The level of exclusion of people with disabilities in Mexico City is reportedly lower than in the suburbs, however there are still many neighborhoods where persons with disabilities are not able to exit their homes (Torres, 2014).

*Inclusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Social Work: A Challenge for Professional Education*

Access resulting from better-designed surroundings plays an essential role in the social participation of people with functional limitations. Furthermore, ICT's can provide increased access for persons with disabilities to all aspects of modern life (Discapnet, 2016). ICTs provide new ways to communicate, manage data and organize our lives. For this reason, Feria (2015, p. 3) proposes that "social work must not ignore this, since innovation in favor of its own management processes, teaching and research will result in better tools to face environmental challenges."

According to Feria (2015), in 2010 the Oxford University's Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, identified the following necessary social work knowledge and skills:

- E-awareness, related to reflective knowledge.
- Technological literacy, that is, the ability to use ICTs skillfully.
- Information and digital literacy. This is the capacity to understand, evaluate and interpret information gathered from different sources, and the ability to produce new knowledge with the support of ICTs.
- Digital literacy. This is the ability to gather relevant information and use ICTs to access, store, organize, integrate and share information and knowledge in a variety of formats.
- Media literacy. This includes awareness of traditional media transformation within the field of telematics (Feria, 2015).

The digital divide is the "line that separates people who already communicate and coordinate by means of digital networks from those who have not yet reached this advanced state of development" (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2003, p. 7). This should motivate policy-makers

to ponder about the social impact of access to ICTs, on the socio-economic development of functionally diverse persons and other marginalized populations (Tello, 2008, p. 2).

A wide digital gap currently affects the Mexican general population as well as specific age, geographic, income, and other subgroups (AMITI—Mexican Association of the Information Technology Industry, 2006). This is mainly the result of lack of incentives to use ICTs and lack of availability of ICTs in the workplace (Tello, 2008). This is particularly true within the profession of social work. The incorporation of ICTs into our profession in Mexico is very limited, perhaps due to lack of economic resources, technical support, and training, even though its use is very essential and innovative. This represents a challenge we must overcome to significantly improve capacity for action, efficiency, diffusion, impact, cost effective measures, participation, transparency and democracy. Because of this, it is necessary to incorporate the use of ICTs into social interventions at the individual, group, or community levels (Santás, 2015).

## Conclusion

“Equal Opportunity” and “Universal Design” represent a comprehensive approach to social accessibility. The key values of this paradigm seek to produce a new egalitarian culture of response to needs and reduced inequality, consistent with the Objectives for Sustainable Development and Human Rights promoted by the United Nations. At the same time, ICTs have revolutionized education, re-shaped cultures, and created new social structures, economic models, and job markets in virtually every country around the globe. Lack of adequate access to ICTs represents a hidden barrier to the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Mexico. For this reason, Mexican officials must work to overcome this barrier. They should formulate new policies for professional social work education aimed at empowering social workers, the general population, and particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Rodríguez (2010) proposes that the role of professional social workers has been transformed as a result of drastic changes in their employing organizations, the now required education for effective practice, and the changing characteristics and social origins of their targeted populations. This new reality forces

social workers to overcome new challenges and meet new objectives. Consistent with these views, the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Superior Education in Mexico (ANUIES, in Spanish) declared that education in the 21st century must facilitate relevant organizational and operational transformations to respond to new challenges and requirements. New competencies and knowledge are needed to promote the full integration of marginalized groups. Twenty-first century universities and social work educational programs, in particular, should prepare students to effectively respond to emerging practice demands effectively and efficiently. They must identify new fields of action in an effort to improve citizens' living conditions. This has motivated social work faculty members to seek curricular innovations (Preciado, Covarrubias, Alcaraz, & Arias, 2004).

## References

- AMITI (2006). *Políticas públicas en materia de Tecnologías de Información y Comunicaciones para impulsar la competitividad de México*. México: AMITI.
- Cabero, V.; Trejo, M. C and Fernández, V. (2011). *Guía de recomendaciones y líneas de actuación en inclusión social*. Fundación Luis Vives. Retrieved on [http://www.luisvivescs.org/upload/13/40/Guia\\_Inclusion\\_FLV\\_ACCESI\\_BLE\\_VF.pdf](http://www.luisvivescs.org/upload/13/40/Guia_Inclusion_FLV_ACCESI_BLE_VF.pdf)
- Coria, S.A. (2010). Accesibilidad e inclusión social en las currículas de diseño. *Actas de Diseño*. Vol. 8, pp. 94–97. Retrieved on [http://fido.palermo.edu/servicios\\_dyc/publicacionesdc/archivos/147\\_libro.pdf](http://fido.palermo.edu/servicios_dyc/publicacionesdc/archivos/147_libro.pdf)
- CRUE (2014). *Formación curricular en diseño para todas las personas. Trabajo Social*. Retrieved on [http://www.fundaciononce.es/sites/default/files/trabajo\\_social.pdf](http://www.fundaciononce.es/sites/default/files/trabajo_social.pdf).
- De la Fuente, Y.M. (2009). Los estudios de grado. La utopía hecha realidad en el ámbito social. *Revista Nudos*, no. 4, pp. 49–54.
- De La Fuente, Y. M; Martín, M-C. and Hernández, J. (2016). El nuevo paradigma de la accesibilidad social. Rompiendo barreras invisibles. In Pastor, E. and Cano, L. (Eds). *Políticas e intervenciones ante los procesos de vulnerabilidad y exclusión de personas y territorios. Análisis comparado México-España* (pp 145–156). Madrid. Editorial DYKINSON, S.L.

- Díaz, E. (2010). Ciudadanía, identidad y exclusión social de las personas con discapacidad. *Revista Política y Sociedad*, Vol. 47, núm. 1: 115–135.
- Dirección General de Derechos Humanos y Democracia (2014). México. Boletín no. 1. Retrieved on [https://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/mi-lan/images/boletines/boletin\\_51\\_programa\\_discapacidad.pdf](https://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/mi-lan/images/boletines/boletin_51_programa_discapacidad.pdf)
- DISCAPNET, Observatorio de Accesibilidad (2016). Retrieved on [http://www.discapnet.es/Castellano/areastematicas/Accessibilidad/Observatorio\\_infoaccesibilidad/Paginas/default.aspx](http://www.discapnet.es/Castellano/areastematicas/Accessibilidad/Observatorio_infoaccesibilidad/Paginas/default.aspx)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2003). Los caminos hacia una sociedad de la información en América Latina y el Caribe. Retrieved on <http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/5/11575/dge2195-conf91-3.pdf>
- ENADIS, 2010. Encuesta Nacional sobre Discriminación en México. Retrieved on <http://www.conapred.org.mx/userfiles/files/Enadis-PCD-Accss.pdf>
- Feria, L. (2015). No hay marcha atrás: Trabajo Social en la Sociedad del Conocimiento. Comunicación en XIX Encuentro Nacional y IX Internacional de Investigación en Trabajo Social. Universidad de Colima. México. Retrieved on <http://eventos.ucol.mx/content/micrositios/241/file/memoria/pdf/m2.pdf>
- Hernández, J.; De La Fuente, Y.M and Campo, M. (2014). La accesibilidad universal y el diseño para todas las personas factor clave para la inclusión social desde el design thinking curricular. *Educació Social. Revista d'intervenció Socioeducativa*, 58, p. 119–134.
- Hernández, S. and De la Fuente, Y.M (2016). Análisis competencial de la atención a la dependencia en los adultos mayores desde el ámbito institucional de México. *Gestión política pública* vol.25 no.1. México. Retrieved on [http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1405-10792016000100008](http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-10792016000100008)
- Fernández, T. and López-Peláez, A. (2008). *Trabajo Social Comunitario: afrontado juntos los desafíos del siglo XXI*. Alianza Editorial, Madrid
- National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information Technologies (2001). 12th General Population and Housing Census conducted in 2000. Retrieved on [http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/ccpv/cpv2000/iter\\_2000.aspx](http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/ccpv/cpv2000/iter_2000.aspx)
- OMS 2011. Informe mundial sobre la discapacidad. Retrieved on [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/summary\\_es.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/summary_es.pdf?ua=1)
- UN (2006) International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/documents/tccconvs.pdf>
- Partida, V. (2006). Proyecciones de la población de México 2005-2050 Retrieved on [http://www.conapo.gob.mx/work/models/CONAPO/proyecciones\\_estatales/Proy05-50.pdf](http://www.conapo.gob.mx/work/models/CONAPO/proyecciones_estatales/Proy05-50.pdf)



- Preciado, S. A.; Covarrubias, E.; Alcaraz, C.A. y Arias, M.P. (2004). Innovaciones curriculares en la formación universitaria de trabajadores sociales. *Interface—Comunic, Saúde, Educvo*, n15, p.303–12.
- Programa Nacional para el Desarrollo de las Personas con Discapacidad (PRONADDIS) 2009-2012. Retrieved on [http://www.educacion.especial.sep.gob.mx/pdf/issuu/pronaddis\\_2009\\_2012.pdf](http://www.educacion.especial.sep.gob.mx/pdf/issuu/pronaddis_2009_2012.pdf)
- Rodríguez, R. M. (2010). El impacto de las TIC en la transformación de la enseñanza universitaria: Repensar los modelos de enseñanza y aprendizaje. *TESI (Teoría de la Educación. Educación y Cultura en la Sociedad de la Información)*, 11(1), 1–38.
- RAE, Real Academia Española (2016). Diccionario de la Lengua. Retrieved on <http://dle.rae.es/?id=DgIqVCc>
- Santás, J.I. (2015). Intervención Social: El Reto de las TIC en el Trabajo Social. Comunicación en XIX Encuentro Nacional y IX Internacional de Investigación en Trabajo Social. Universidad de Colima. México. Retrieved on <http://eventos.ucol.mx/eventoreniests2015/>
- Tello, E. (2008). Las tecnologías de la información y comunicaciones (TIC) y la brecha digital: su impacto en la sociedad de México. *Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento*. Vol 4, nº 2. Pp. 1–8.
- Torres, E. (2014). *Discapacidad y Accesibilidad en la Ciudad de México. Reflexiones desde una perspectiva antropofísica*. Retrieved on <http://www.laciudadviva.org/blogs/?p=18964>

## Corresponding Authors

Antonio López Peláez  
alopez@der.uned.es

Xabier Aguiar Fernández  
francisco.aguiar@uvigo.es

Dee Ann Sherwood  
dee.sherwood@wmich.edu

Susan Weinger  
susan.weinger@wmich.edu

Francisco Javier García-Castilla  
fjgarcia@der.uned.es

Neus Caparrós Civera  
caparros@unirioja.es

Héctor Luis Díaz  
hector.diaz@wmich.edu

Johnny Ramírez-Johnson  
ramirez-johnson@fuller.edu

Arantxa Hernández-Echegaray  
aran.etxe@gmail.com

Mioara Diaconu  
mioara.diaconu@wmich.edu

Enrique Pastor Seller  
epastor@um.es

María del Carmen Martín Cano  
mmcano@ujaen.es

# JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL WELFARE

## 2018 Publication Information & Subscription Rates

Volume:	XLV
Volume Year:	2018
Publication Period:	1-18 to 12-18
Publication Frequency:	Quarterly
Publication Dates:	March, June, September, December

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

	Retail Cost Subscription Agent	
Online version only	Individual	
	\$54.00	\$54.00
	Institution	
	\$98.00	\$88.00
Print plus online version (package)	Individual in U.S.	
	\$62.00	\$62.00
	Individual Outside U.S.	
	\$74.00	\$74.00
	Institution in U.S.	
	\$106.00	\$96.00
	Institution Outside U.S.	
	\$118.00	\$108.00

Institutional subscribers can access the Journal's articles with ip authentication. Please send ip information to [swrk-jssw@wmich.edu](mailto:swrk-jssw@wmich.edu). Individual subscribers can access the Journal's articles online by contacting [swrk-jssw@wmich.edu](mailto:swrk-jssw@wmich.edu) for a password.

Prepayment in U.S. funds. Single year subscriptions only. Subscriptions non-cancelable. Free replacement within six (6) months of publication of issues not received. Back Issues: \$20.00 per issue, plus \$2.00 for postage. ISSN: 0191-5096. Tax Free Registry No.: A-154961. Federal Tax ID No.: 386007327. Index: Included in Issue Number 4 (December) at no additional cost. Web Site: <http://www.wmich.edu/socialwork/journal/>. Contact Person: Melinda McCormick Ph.D., Managing Editor. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, School of Social Work, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5354 USA. e-mail: [swrk-jssw@wmich.edu](mailto:swrk-jssw@wmich.edu). Tel: 269-387-3205 Fax: 269-387-3183.